

HINDUISM

Contemporary Hindus commonly refer to their tradition as the "universal truth" (*sanatana-dharma*), implying that it is a meta-tradition which is able to embrace the truths of all other systems of thought while transcending them through its expansive ability to embrace truth in multiple manifestations. Hinduism is the dominant religious tradition of the Indian subcontinent, and currently over 700 million people consider themselves to be Hindus.

DIVERSITY WITHIN HINDUISM

Hinduism is, however, a difficult tradition to define. Its dominant feature is diversity, and its adherents are not required to accept any doctrine or set of doctrines, to perform any particular practices, or to accept any text or system as uniquely authoritative. Many Hindus, for example, are monotheists and believe that there is only one God, despite the proliferation of gods in Hinduism. They assert that God has many manifestations, and that God may appear differently to different people and different cultures.

Other Hindus are polytheists who believe that the various gods they worship are distinct entities, while pantheistic Hindus perceive the divine in the world around them, as a principle that manifests in natural phenomena, particular places, flora and fauna, or other humans. Some Hindus consider themselves to be agnostic, contending that God is in principle unknown and unknowable. Other Hindus are atheists who do not believe in the existence of any gods, but this position does not lead to their excommunication by their fellow Hindus. Even more confusingly, in daily practice it is common to see one person or community sequentially manifesting combinations of these attitudes in different circumstances.

Hinduism has a plethora of doctrines and systems, but there is no collection of tenets that could constitute a universally binding Hindu creed, nor is there any core belief that is so fundamental that it would be accepted by all Hindus. Hinduism has produced a vast collection of sacred texts, but no one has the authority of the Christian Bible, the Jewish Torah, or the Muslim Qur'an. Perhaps the most widely revered sacred texts are the Vedas ("Wisdom Texts"), most of which were written over 2,000 years ago, but despite their generally-accepted authoritativeness few Hindus today are even able to read them, and the *brahmins* (priests) whose sacred task is to memorize and recite them generally are unable to explain what they mean.

In searching for a way to define the boundaries of Hinduism, the term "Hindu" may provide some help. It was originally coined by Persians who used it to refer to the people they encountered in northern India. Thus the term "Hindu" originally referred to the inhabitants of a geographical area, and in later centuries it was adopted by people of India who identified themselves with the dominant religious tradition of the subcontinent.

Contemporary Hinduism is still delimited more by geography than by belief or practice: A

Hindu is someone who lives on the Indian subcontinent or is descended from people of the region, who considers himself or herself to be a Hindu, and who is accepted as such by other Hindus. There are no distinctive doctrines whose acceptance would serve as a litmus test of orthodoxy, no ecclesiastical authority that is able to declare some to be Hindus in good standing or label others as heretics, and no ceremony whose performance would serve as a definitive rite of passage into the tradition. There is no founder of the tradition; it has no dominant system of theology or a single moral code. Contemporary Hinduism embraces groups whose respective faiths and practices have virtually nothing in common with each other.

This is not to say, however, that Hinduism lacks distinctive doctrines, practices, or scriptures; in fact, the exact opposite is the case. Hinduism has developed a plethora of philosophical schools, rituals, and sacred texts, and its adherents commonly assert a belief in a shared heritage, historical continuity, and family relationships between the multiple manifestations of their tradition. The selections given below represent only a small sampling of the vast corpus of Hindu religious literature. In addition, it should be noted that this literature represents only a tiny part of the Hindu tradition, and primarily

reflects the views and practices of a small intellectual elite. The vast majority of Hindus have been—and continue to be—primarily illiterate agricultural workers with little if any knowledge of the sacred scriptures. Their practices are generally derived from local cults and beliefs that often have little in common with the religion and philosophy of the authors of the scriptures. Furthermore, these texts do not form a coherent system, but are as diverse as Hinduism itself. They were written over the course of millennia and reflect shifting paradigms and political, religious, and social agendas, geographical differences, and varying ideas about how people should worship, think, live, and interact.

Hindu Scriptures.

Hinduism may be compared to a complex symphony in which new themes are introduced as the piece develops, while old ones continue to be woven into its texture. Nothing is ever truly lost, and elements of the distant past often return to prominence at unexpected times, although often in forms that are altered in accordance with the intellectual and religious currents of a particular time and place. The scriptures of Hinduism reflect its diversity and its complex history. They include ancient hymns to anthropomorphic gods and liturgical texts detailing how priests should prepare sacrifices, mystical texts that speculate on the nature of ultimate reality, devotional literature to a variety of deities, philosophical texts of great subtlety and insight, and combinations of these and related themes.

The earliest stratum of Indian sacred literature that is accessible today is found in the Vedas, which evolved into their present form between 1400 and 400 B.C.E. The earliest of these were brought to India around 1300 B.C.E. by semi-nomadic tribes who referred to themselves as Aryans, meaning "noble" or "wise." Upon their arrival, the newcomers encountered indigenous inhabitants, who were dubbed "slaves" (*dasa* or *dasyu*). The Vedas are referred to by

Hindus as "revelation" (*shruti*, literally "what is heard"), in contrast to other scriptures referred to as "tradition" (*smriti*, literally "what is remembered"). Both classes are regarded as canonical, but the latter is not considered to have the same level of authoritativeness as the Vedas. The Vedas, being completely transcendent, are not subject to human imperfections, but are products of direct revelation.

There are four Vedas: (1) the *Rig Veda*, so named because it is composed of stanzas (*rik*); (2) the *Sama Veda* (composed mostly of hymns taken from the *Rig Veda* and set to various melodies, or *saman*); (3) the *Yajur Veda* (composed of *yajus*, selected ritual prayers, mostly taken from the *Rig Veda*); and (4) the *Atharva Veda* (a collection of ritual texts named after the sage Atharvan). The Vedas contain several primary types of literature: (1) chants or hymns (*samhita*), generally directed toward the gods (*deva*) of the Vedic pantheon; (2) ritual texts (*brahmana*), which detail the sacrifices performed by brahmins; (3) mystical texts concerned with the quest for ultimate truth (*aranyakas* and *upanishads*). According to tradition, the Vedas are not the product of human composition (*apaurusheya*), but are a part of the very fabric of reality. They were

directly perceived by "seers" (*rishi*), whose mystical contemplations—aided by ingestion of an intoxicating beverage called *soma*—enabled them to intuit primordial sounds reverberating throughout the universe, and rendered into human language as the books of the Vedas.

ARYAN RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Contemporary scholars commonly refer to the indigenous people of the subcontinent as Dravidians, and recent archeological evidence suggests that they attained a high degree of social development prior to the arrival of the Aryans, although their society was probably in decline by the time the Aryans began to enter India. The Aryans were of European stock, and described themselves as tall, fair-skinned, blond-haired, and civilized, while they characterized the indigenous people as short, snub-nosed, curly-haired, barbaric, and immoral. They viewed their coming as a positive development that introduced righteousness and civilization to the region, and during the next several centuries they gradually subjugated the Dravidians, who were generally relegated to the lowest levels of Aryan society.

From an early period, the Aryans and their descendants propounded the idea that human society should ideally be stratified, with each social class having clearly defined functions and duties. At the top of the hierarchy were the brahmins, the priestly class, whose sacred duty was to perform sacrifices to the gods described in the Vedas. Many of these gods were personifications of natural phenomena, such as the sun and moon, wind, and so forth. Many

gods were believed to have dominion over a particular natural force or phenomenon, and the rituals of the Vedas were commonly directed to either one god or a small group of gods who were considered to have the ability to affect a particular sphere of divine provenance.

The role of the priests was central in this system: they were expected to remain ritually pure and to preserve the sacred texts, along with the sacred lore of priestcraft. Their social function prevented them from engaging in manual labor, trade, agriculture, or other non-priestly occupations, since these were considered polluting. In exceptional circumstances occasioned by special need they were allowed to earn a living by other means, but ideally their lives should be devoted to study of the sacred Vedas and performance of Vedic rituals. This was crucial to the maintenance of the system of "upholding the world" (*loka-samgraha*) which was a core concern of Vedic religion. In this system, the brahmins performed a pivotal function in offering sacrifices to the gods. The sacrifices were generally transmuted into smoke through the agency of Agni, god of fire (who is manifested in the ritual fire, as well as other forms of combustion). Smoke converted the material of the sacrifice into a subtle essence suitable for the gods' consumption, and the

process required that the brahmins remain ritually pure, since any pollution they acquired was passed on to their sacrifices. The gods would naturally be insulted if offered unclean food and would respond by denying the requests the brahmins made on behalf of the sponsors of the sacrifices.

The Vedic system was based on a symbiosis of gods and humans: the gods required the sacrificial offerings, and humans needed the gods to use their supernatural powers to maintain cosmic order (*rita*). The system assumed that humans only prosper in a stable and ordered cosmos, an idea that is reflected in the story of the slaying of the demon Vritra ("Obstructor") by Indra, the king of the gods in the Vedas. Demons thrive in chaos, and at the beginning of time Vritra rules over a chaotic cosmos until Indra, after a mighty battle, slays him and thus makes it possible for the gods to establish order. This primordial battle reflects the crucial role played by the gods in establishing and maintaining cosmic law.

The concerns of Vedic literature are primarily practical and this-worldly. They focus on particular pragmatic goals, such as bountiful crops, fertility, peace, stability, wealth, and so forth. The results of the sacrifices are believed to accrue in the present life, and although a world

of the dead is mentioned, it is does not play a major role in the early Vedic tradition.

Hymns of the Early Vedic Period

The greatest record of Hindu mythology from this period is the Rig Veda, which contains hymns and ritual texts devoted to the worship of the Vedic gods. These verses describe the attributes of the gods, recount the mythos of each god and his or her particular sacrificial functions and associations. The first hymn depicts the creation of the universe as beginning with the sacrifice of Purusha ("Man"), a giant god whose body formed the raw material for the formation of the stars, the planets, and for living things. According to the story, the four social classes (varna) of Hinduism were also created through this sacrifice, thus providing a scriptural justification for the stratification of Indian society. Another view of creation indicates that originally existence arose from non-existence and that the gods later were produced by a goddess "who crouched with legs spread," an image with obvious anthropomorphic overtones. It suggests that the creation of the gods was similar to a human birth, but the position described may also suggest that creation is linked with the practice of yoga, which is believed to produce energy that may be used in the generation of life.

In Vedic mythology, Indra is said to be the king of the gods, and he embodies the warrior virtues

valued by the conquering Aryans. He is fearless in battle, always victorious over his enemies and, although he is sometimes portrayed as proud and boastful, these qualities do not detract from his prowess as a warrior. This hymn recounts the greatest of his mighty deeds, the slaying of the demon Vritra, a powerful serpent-like creature that was wreaking havoc throughout the universe, holding back the rain waters that are essential to the prosperity of living things, and obstructing the establishment of cosmic order, which is required for a stable and harmonious world. Wielding his mighty thunderbolt, Indra slays the demon, splits open his body, cuts off his limbs, and thus eliminates the threat he poses.

Agni is one of the most important gods of the Vedas. As the god of fire, he transmutes sacrificial offerings into smoke, which is consumed by the gods. Thus he serves as the intermediary between the divine and human realms and is a paradigm for the brahmin priests. Vedic hymns invoke Agni in his role as transporter of the dead. He is asked to burn the corpse of a dead man and to ensure that he is brought to the land of the dead. The concept of afterlife is rather vague in the early Vedas. There are references to a world of the dead, ruled by Yama, who was the first human to die.

He found the way to the land of the dead, and now he brings others there. At the end of the ritual the pyre is soaked so thoroughly with water that a small pool is formed, and plants, frogs, and other living things will grow there, symbolizing the renewal of life from the ashes of death.

Soma is an intoxicating drink that plays a major role in Vedic literature. It was made from a creeping plant that was crushed and strained to make a whitish beverage that apparently produced visions and ecstatic states of mind. The plant used is a matter of current debate, and a number of theories have been proposed, none of which is considered definitive by contemporary scholars. As this passage indicates, those who drank it experienced a feeling of exaltation and expansion of consciousness. The writer of this hymn claims that drinking it has also made him immortal.

Gender issues also play an important role in Vedic writings. One hymn depicts a struggle between a husband and wife named Agastya and Lopamudra. Lopamudra has just successfully seduced Agastya, who was trying to avoid sexual intercourse in order to store up the vital energy he acquired as a product of yogic exertions. It captures a common theme in classical Indian literature: woman as temptress, whose

unrestrained sexual desire and physical charms distract male yogins from their ascetic practice and cause them to dissipate the power they have painstakingly gained through meditation and self-restraint. Another hymn is spoken by a woman who has managed to eliminate her rivals and emerge victorious over her husband, who now submits to her will:

1. There the sun has risen, and here my good fortune has risen. Being a clever woman, and able to triumph, I have triumphed over my husband.

2. I am the banner; I am the head. I am the formidable one who has the deciding word. My husband will obey my will alone, as I emerge triumphant.

3. My sons kill their enemies and my daughter is an empress, and I am completely victorious. My voice is supreme in my husband's ears.

4. The oblation that Indra made and so became glorious and supreme, this is what I have made for you, O gods. I have become truly without rival wives.

5. Without rival wives, killer of rival wives, victorious and pre-eminent, I have grabbed

**for myself the attraction of the other women
as if it were the wealth of flighty women.**

**6. I have conquered and become pre-
eminent over these rival wives, so that I may
rule as empress over this hero and over the
people.**

[Rig Veda 10.159]

**Other Vedic hymns focus on sacrificial rites
which help the sacrificer mentally prepare prior
to performance of the sacrifice. He visualizes the
fire altar as the entire universe and views the
sacrifice as a way to attain spiritual knowledge.
It is notable in that it shows the increasingly
cosmic significance given to the rituals: they
were no longer merely localized sacrifices
performed for particular ends, but instead
microcosmic expressions of macrocosmic forces
and processes. The sacrificer meditates on the
greater ramifications of the sacrifice about to be
performed, its cosmic repercussions, and its
transformative effects on the person who
performs it. It also shows an expanding view of
the cosmos and a corresponding expansion in
the religious vision of brahmin priests, who are
no longer content simply to perform sacrifices
for limited goals, but who are increasingly**

interested in the effects they will have beyond this world and in the mind of the sacrificer. One important kind of sacrificial rite was the horse sacrifice which served to establish the dominion of a king by demonstrating how large an area he controlled. For a year prior to the sacrifice, a horse would be set free to wander wherever it wished, indicating the hegemony of the king. To the extent that other rulers were unable to turn the horse away, it served notice of the areas a particular ruler effectively controlled. At the end of the year the horse was offered as a sacrifice to the gods, but although it was killed it is stated in the ritual that it would enjoy a future in heaven.

THE UPANISHADS AND YOGA

The focus shifts in the later Vedic period, in which texts of speculative philosophy and mysticism begin to appear. Referred to as Aranyakas and Upanishads, they were written by sages who often expressed dissatisfaction with the ritualism and this-worldly focus of the early Vedic texts. Their authors sought the ultimate power behind the sacrifices, the force that gives rise to gods, humans, and all the other phenomena of the universe. They found this through a process of inward-looking meditation that sought an unchanging essence beyond the transient phenomena of existence. The present life was no longer viewed as the beginning and end of one's existence; rather, living beings were said to be reborn in successive lives in accordance with their actions (*karma*). The actions of the present result in opposite and equal reactions in the future, and one's present life was said to be a result of the karma accrued in the past. The cycle of existence (*samsara*) was said by the sages of the Upanishads to be beginningless, but it may be ended. It is perpetuated by a basic misunderstanding of the true nature of reality (*avidya*, "ignorance"), but one may escape it by attaining correct understanding of truth, which is only found by

people who shift their attention from external things to find the truly real.

By following the path of wisdom that correctly discriminates the real from the unreal, the truly important from the merely pleasant, and the changeless from the transitory, the sage eventually discovers that within everyone is an eternal, unchanging essence, an immortal soul referred to as the "self" (*atman*). The Upanishads declare that this essence alone survives death, that it has been reborn countless times in an infinite variety of different bodies, while itself remaining unchanged by the multiple identities we all develop in successive lifetimes. It is characterized by three qualities: being, consciousness, and bliss (*sat cit ananda*), meaning that it is pure, unchanging being, and its nature is never altered, despite the changing external circumstances of our lives; it is pure consciousness that takes no notice of the vicissitudes of our lives; and it remains unaffected by our joys, sorrows, hopes, disappointments, pleasures, or pains, and so it is in a continuous state of equanimity. Moreover, the Upanishadic sages identified the self with the cosmic ultimate, something supremely mysterious, hidden from ordinary perception but all-pervasive, supremely subtle, the essence of all that is. This ultimate was said to be beyond

words or conceptual thought, and was referred to as "Brahman," because it is the purest and most sublime principle of existence, just as in human society brahmins are the purest and holiest class

Specific Upanishads.

The Katha Upanishad presents the story of a brahmin boy named Naciketas. His father, Aruni, is performing a sacrifice in which he is required to give away all his possessions, but Naciketas notices that he is not complying with the spirit of the sacrifice. Naciketas asks his father, "To whom will you give me," to which his father angrily replies, "I give you to Yama [the god of death]." Unfortunately for both Naciketas and his father, words spoken in the context of a sacrifice have great power, and so Naciketas is immediately sent to the palace of Yama.

Yama, however, is not in the palace when Naciketas arrives and does not return for three days. When Yama returns and sees that Naciketas has been waiting for a long while and has not been given the courtesy due to a brahmin, he apologizes and offers to make restitution by granting Naciketas three wishes. Being a dutiful son, Naciketas first asks that he be able to return to his father and that his father receive him with happiness and love instead of anger.

His next wish is significant: he asks Yama to teach him about the Naciketas fire for which he is named. This is significant because it shows

that in this text the traditional values and practices of brahmins are not being questioned. Naciketas does not doubt the efficacy of the sacrifices; instead, he wishes to learn more about them, and only after this does he make his third request, in which he asks Yama to tell him what happens to a human being after death.

Yama responds by testing Naciketas in order to determine his sincerity in asking about this. He offers Naciketas worldly goods instead, things like wealth, land, power, long-lived sons and grandsons, fame, etc., but none of these things interest Naciketas. He understands that such things are transitory and fleeting, and he wishes instead for knowledge of the atman (the self), which is truly valuable. Having tested his resolve, Yama praises him for choosing the good (shreyas) over the pleasant (preyas). Yama then teaches Naciketas about the atman, the essence of each individual, the eternal, unchanging reality that exists forever, unaffected by the circumstances and events of a person's countless rebirths. The atman, he declares, cannot be known through the senses or the intellect: it must be known through direct, intuitive realization. The culmination of the teaching is Yama's revelation that the atman is not only a personal essence; it is also said to be identical with the cosmic Ultimate, called Brahman.

The Mundaka Upanishad expresses a somewhat different opinion of the value of sacrifices: it calls them "unsteady boats" that should not be relied on by a person wishing to leave cyclic existence. It does not, however, urge brahmins to stop performing sacrifices, but instead warns them not to rely on them exclusively and instead advises them to remove themselves from the world, practice asceticism and devotion in the forest in order to work at achieving a tranquil mind that knows truth.

The Aruni Upanishad instructs the aspiring world renouncer (samnyasin) on the proper motivation for leaving society. It indicates that one should give up performance of the Vedic rituals and leave family, friends, and occupation behind, focusing one's attention on the final goal of realization of the atman. In a special ritual, one takes into oneself the sacred fire that one had maintained as a householder, which now becomes identified with the fire of the digestive processes. One discards the sacred thread that one has worn since the initiation (upanayana) ceremony, which designates one as a member of one of the three "twice-born" classes. After this one has no caste identity, and can wander anywhere—and take food from anyone—without fear of ritual pollution.

Vedanta. Shankara was one of the greatest expositors of the thought of the Upanishads and the primary exponent of the non-dualist (advaita) school of commentary. The Upanishadic statement "That is you" (tat tvam asi). is viewed by Shankara and other exponents of non-dualist Vedanta as a statement of the non-difference of atman and Brahman. He also contends that the path to liberation is a solitary one and states that every person must win salvation alone, and that no one else can help. Even the scriptures are only guideposts, but one who becomes attached to them will remain enmeshed in cyclic existence. They point the way, but the goal is only reached by those who transcend all mundane supports and actualize direct, non-conceptual understanding of the atman. Maya plays a central role in Shankara's interpretation of the Upanishads. The term literally means "magic" or "illusion," and he claims that it is the power by which Brahman hides the truth from ordinary beings. It is a creative power that causes the apparent phenomena of cyclic existence to be superimposed on the unitary Brahman.

Maya, in her potential aspect, is the divine power of the Lord. She has no beginning. She is composed of the three qualities

(guna), subtle, beyond perception. It is from the effects she produces that her existence is inferred by the wise. It is she who gives birth to the whole universe. She is neither being nor non-being, nor a mixture of both. She is neither divided nor undivided, nor a mixture of both. She is neither an indivisible whole, nor composed of parts, nor a mixture of both. She is most strange. Her nature is inexplicable. Just as knowing a rope to be a rope destroys the illusion that it is a snake, so Maya is destroyed by direct experience of Brahman—the pure, the free, the one without a second. [Viveka-chudamani, p. 49]

Ramanuja disagrees with the non-dualist system of Upanishadic interpretation. Instead, he contends that it is absurd to completely equate the absolute Brahman with the individual atman. As an exponent of devotionism, Ramanuja rejects the non-dualist system, since it would make devotion absurd. If atman and Brahman were one, there would be no real basis for worship. Ramanuja contends that the Upanishadic statement "That is you" does not mean what non-dualists think it does; rather, it indicates that there are two separate entities, atman and Brahman, and that the former is wholly dependent upon the latter, like a wave in

relation to the ocean. The wave appears to stand apart from the ocean, but its substance and being derive from the ocean, although it has at least a qualifiedly separate identity. Similarly, the atman derives from Brahman, but because the history of each atman is distinctly its own, it contradicts reason and actual experience to claim that atman is completely identical with Brahman.

Yoga

According to this system, the perceptions of ordinary beings are profoundly distorted by ignorance, and the only way to attain correct knowledge is through a process of discipline (*yoga*) in which one's thoughts and body are gradually brought under control, and one's attention is turned away from sense objects and directed within. These premises are shared with the system outlined in the *Yoga Aphorisms* (*Yoga-sutra*) of Patanjali, who is credited with gathering together the principle practices and premises of the yoga system. Patanjali's system, however, differs in significant ways from that of the Upanishads, although both use the term "yoga" to describe their respective training programs. The Upanishads outline a monistic system in which the sole reality is said to be Brahman, while everything else is based on mistaken perceptions. Patanjali, by contrast, contends that both matter (*prakriti*) and spirit (*purusha*) are real entities, and the goal of his system is separation (*kaivalya*) of spirit from matter, while the Upanishads aim at a final apotheosis in which all dualities are transcended and one realizes the fundamental identity of the self and Brahman. The final goal of the Upanishads is expressed in the greatest of the "great statements"

(mahavakya) that sum up the central insights of the Upanishadic sages: "That is you" (*tat tvam asi*), which expresses an absolute identity of the individual soul and Brahman. Patanjali's goal, by contrast, is separation that liberates one's spiritual essence from matter.

The goal of both systems is liberation (*moksha*) from the cycle of existence, but each conceives release differently. Both consider yoga to be the primary practice for attaining the final goal, and for both yoga is a program of introspective meditation that begins with physical discipline, control of random, ignorant thoughts, and development of insight into unchanging truth, but the ontological presuppositions and ultimate goals of the two systems differ in significant details.

For Patanjali, the term "yoga" may be used to refer to a range of practices for disciplining mind and body. In Patanjali's system the focus is on developing progressively greater control over the agitations and fluctuations of mind and body in order to arrive at a state of perfect equanimity. One accomplishes this by turning the attention inward, away from sense objects, which leads to detachment and wisdom. A person who becomes detached from external things has no basis for continued existence, and thus becomes liberated from the cycle of birth

and death. Patanjali describes the process by which one develops one's powers of concentration through disciplining thoughts, bringing mind and body under control, and weaning oneself from attachment to external objects. He also discusses the results of yogic practice, which include unshakable mental stability, equanimity, dispassion, and eventually liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

PURANAS AND EPICS.

In contemporary India the Puranas and Epics are among the most widely known of Hindu scriptures. The Puranas recount the mythologies of such popular gods as Shiva, Vishnu, and Devi (the Goddess). Rich in symbolism and containing a wide variety of divergent traditions, they describe the attributes of the gods and indicate how they should be worshipped. In the Linga Purana, Indra teaches a human sage about the cyclical nature of time. According to this system, when the universe is first created a golden age begins. During this time beings have long lifespans, beautiful bodies, and great happiness. As time goes on, however, things begin imperceptibly to worsen, and eventually it becomes necessary to divide people according to their predispositions.

In the Brahmanda Purana, Vishnu tells a human sage about the origin of the lingam, the phallus of Shiva. The lingam symbolizes both his procreative force and the energy he stores through asceticism. The story begins with a conversation between Brahma, said to be the creator of the universe in Hindu mythology, and Vishnu, who is the creator of Brahma. Brahma believes himself to be supreme, self-created, and omnipotent, but Vishnu informs him that he is in fact his creature. Both gods are then amazed

to see a huge flaming lingam that stretches out of sight. They agree to try to find its top and bottom, but after one thousand years flying respectively up and down are unable to fathom its dimensions. At this point they realize that there is a greater power than themselves, which turns out to be Shiva.

Ramayana.

The two great epics of Hinduism, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, are monumental stories that weave history, myth, and religion into complex, multi-faceted tales that recount important historical and mythical events and indicate the lessons that should be drawn from them. The Ramayana tells the story of Rama—considered by tradition to be an incarnation (avatara) of Vishnu—who takes birth among humans in order to fight against evil forces and establish dharma in the world. Forced to leave his kingdom with his dutiful wife Sita, he wanders in the wilderness, establishing dharma wherever he goes. In a climactic battle he faces the demon Ravana, who has captured Sita. Rama slays Ravana, thus enabling dharma to be established in the demon's realm. The opening section of the Ramayana contains a synopsis of the main events of the story. The following verses tell of how prince Rama was banished from his kingdom through the machinations of his stepmother Kaikeyi, who had been told by his father Dasharatha that she could ask him for anything she wished. Kaikeyi requested that Rama, the rightful ruler, not assume the throne, and that her son Bharata would instead become king. As a righteous king, Dasharatha could not

refuse, and so reluctantly he acceded to the request.

Kaikeyi knew that the people of the kingdom wanted Rama to rule, and so to ensure that Bharata would remain king she asked that Rama be banished in order that popular opinion would not undermine her son's authority. The king agreed, but as a result he died of a broken heart soon after. Accompanied by his brother Lakshman and Sita, the model of a devout Hindu wife, Rama went off to the forest. During his travels he was beset by a horde of demons (rakshasa), but he defeated them all. This angered the demon lord Ravana, who captured Sita and imprisoned her in his city of Lanka. Ravana then fell in love with Sita and tried to convince her to renounce Rama and become his queen, but Sita spurned his advances. With the help of Hanuman, lord of monkeys, Rama eventually located Sita, slew Ravana, and rescued her. He then returned in triumph to his kingdom, and Bharata eagerly abdicated in Rama's favor, since he had never wished to usurp Rama.

Following Rama's return, however, his subjects began to gossip about Sita, insinuating that while she was in Ravana's castle she may have succumbed to his advances. Rama knew that Sita was innocent, but reluctantly realized that

the gossip could undermine his moral authority, which is closely connected to his wife's conduct. Following the dictates of dharma, Rama was forced to banish Sita from the kingdom. Rama was heartbroken, knowing that her love for him kept her chaste in the castle of Ravana, but his royal duty required him to maintain his reputation for righteousness. The following verses describe how he left the kingdom, joined forces with Hanuman, and then defeated Ravana.

Mahabharata

The Mahabharata tells the story of a climactic battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, two rival clans contending for supremacy in northern India. Unlike the heroes of the Ramayana, the protagonists of the Mahabharata (the Pandavas) often make mistakes, question what is the right course of action, and regret wrong decisions. A section of the Mahabharata called the Bhagavad-gita is one of the most important religious texts in contemporary Hinduism. As the story opens in the Bhagavad-gita, the Pandava Arjuna, perhaps the greatest warrior of his generation, decides to scout the opposition. He asks his charioteer Krishna (who, unbeknownst to him, is really an incarnation of the god Vishnu) to drive the chariot in front of the enemy lines. As he rides past the Kauravas, however, he experiences a crisis of conscience: he recognizes that many of his opponents are relatives, friends, and teachers, and that killing them would result in a great deal of negative karma.

It is important to note that Arjuna is not concerned with killing per se; as a warrior he has killed many people in the past, but these particular people are linked to him by close karmic bonds, and so he perceives a contradiction between the demands of his

warrior's duty (dharma) and the dictates of the law of karma. He decides that the only solution is to opt out of the conflict altogether and become a world renouncer.

In response, Krishna lectures him on the necessity of correctly performing dharma and indicates that Arjuna will receive more negative karma by dereliction of duty than by killing. Furthermore, Krishna asserts, his opponents have already assured their own destruction by their evil deeds, and so Arjuna is merely the instrument through which God will exact punishment. Then Krishna gives Arjuna a solution to the problem he faces, which involves a mental reorientation. Arjuna's problem, as explained by Krishna, is that he sees himself as an agent and is attached to the results of his actions. If, however, he learns the technique of "disciplined action" (karma-yoga), he can develop the ability to act without involving the false sense of ego. Arjuna is told to act selflessly, perceiving himself as an impersonal agent of dharma who is simply following God's will. If he offers all of his actions to God as an act of devotion and cultivates complete detachment, then Arjuna may act without acquiring any negative karma. Moreover, Krishna tells him, such a mental perspective is the mindset of the

true world renouncer, and this alone leads to liberation from cyclic existence.

THE PATH OF DEVOTION

Another important path to liberation lies in the "yoga of devotion" (*bhakti-yoga*), in which one finds salvation through completely identifying oneself with God. The yoga of devotion requires that one focus one's attention so completely on God that all thoughts of ego are transcended in a pure experience of union. There are a variety of ways of conceiving devotion: sometimes it takes the form of a love affair in which the devotee experiences an ecstatic union surpassing any human love; for others devotion takes the form of selfless service to an omnipotent master. Often Hindu devotionalism exhibits elements of both, along with a feeling of an intensely personal relationship between a human being and God.

Mirabhai remains one of the most popular devotional poets of medieval India. She was probably born around 1550 and is said to have been the wife of a Rajput prince who was the son of the ruler (Rana) of Mewar. According to legend, before her marriage she had fallen in love with Krishna and refused to consummate her marriage to the prince because her relationship with the Lord took precedence. One story that is told of her relates that one time she was exchanging words of love to a visitor on the other side of a locked door. Her father-in-law,

the ruler, overheard her and, outraged by the shame she had brought on his family, threatened to kill her. She told him that the person to whom she was speaking was the Lord Krishna, and not a human lover, and her life was spared. In this poem she compares her unhappy home life to the joys of her love affair with Krishna.

Mahadeviyakka was an important poet of the iconoclastic Virashaiva tradition. In her poetry, her devotion to Shiva was often expressed in sexual terms. This led to conflicts with traditional mores and values, particularly those regarding the proper conduct of women. In the following verses, she indicates that her intense devotion to Shiva prevented her from the devotion to her husband required of a traditional Hindu wife. She compares her apparently loveless marriage with her husband to her devotion to Shiva and indicates how little she values the former relationship in comparison with her devotional love affair with the Lord.

I have Maya for mother-in-law; the world
for father-in-law;
three brothers-in-law, like tigers;

**And the husband's thoughts are full of
laughing women: no god, this man.**

And I cannot cross the sister-in-law.

**But I will give this wench the slip and go
cuckold my husband with Hara, my Lord.**

**My mind is my maid: by her kindness, I join
my Lord, my utterly beautiful Lord from
the mountain-peaks, my lord white as
jasmine,**

and I will make Him my good husband.

[poem by Mahadeviyakka]

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

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The Upanishads and Patanjali's yoga system represent a shift from the primacy of sacrifices to the gods in the early Vedic period to an general acceptance of the idea that the final goal of the religious path is moksha. As final liberation from cyclic existence came to be viewed as the supreme goal, sacrifices aimed at maintaining the order of the world and the acquisition of mundane benefits were consequently devalued as inferior to the pursuit of knowledge of truth. As an apparent reaction to this trend, orthodox elements began to stress the importance of performing one's social duties (*dharma*). Texts like the *Laws of Manu* and the *Bhagavad-gita* emphasized the importance of selfless, devout adherence to the duties of one's social class (*varna*): the brahmins, the warriors and rulers (*kshatriya*), the merchants and tradespeople (*vaishya*), and the servants (*shudra*). Both texts asserted that if people ignore their sacred duty the world will fall into chaos, society will crumble, and essential social functions will not be performed. The *Laws of Manu* delineate a system in which people should eventually renounce the world and pursue final liberation, but only after first performing the duties assigned to their social class. In its system of "duties of social classes and stages of life"

(varnashrama-dharma), there are specific duties for each class, and these should be performed diligently in order to maintain the world. The system assumes that only in an ordered universe will some people have the leisure and resources to pursue liberation. The four stages of life are the student, the householder, the forest-dweller, and the world renouncer.

The ideal life begins with the student stage, in which a man finds a spiritual preceptor (*guru*), who teaches him the lore appropriate to his class. The three highest classes (brahmins, kshatriyas, and vaishyas) are said to be "twice-born" (*dvija*) because they undergo a ceremony (the *upanayana*) that initiates them into adulthood and is considered a "second birth." Only these three classes are permitted to study the Vedas or participate in Vedic rituals (but officiating in Vedic ceremonies is the special duty of brahmins).

After a period of study (which varies in length and content among the four classes), a man should marry (only within one's caste), produce male heirs to continue the lineage and perform sacrifices for him and his ancestors after his death, and support the brahmins whose rituals maintain the whole cosmos. According to Manu, after a man has successfully performed his duty, and when sees grandson born (assuring that the

lineage will continue) and gray hairs on his head, he may withdraw from society (often with his wife) and begin to sever the ties that he cultivated during his life in the world. As a "forest dweller" (*vanaprastha*), he should be celibate and detached from worldly enjoyments, cultivate meditation on ultimate truth, and pursue liberation. When he knows that his attachment to mundane things has ceased, he may take the final step of becoming a "world renouncer" (*samnyasin*), completely devoted to the ultimate goal, wandering from place to place and subsisting on alms, intent on final liberation from cyclic existence.

In this system, everything has its time and place, and while liberation is recognized as the ultimate goal of the religious life, it is not allowed to be pursued in a way that might destabilize society. When the demands of dharma have been met, one may pursue one's own ends, but Manu declares that renouncing the world too soon would lead to a degeneration of the whole society, and the resulting chaos would make the attainment of liberation difficult, if not impossible, for anyone.

* * * *

JAINISM

The most distinctive features of Jainism are its extreme asceticism, together with its emphasis on personal effort, and its strict adherence to the doctrine of non-injury. The Jaina path to liberation involves renunciation of material things, coupled with ascetic practices aimed at purifying the soul (*jiva*), cleansing it of the karmic accretions that have colored it and bound it to matter (*ajiva*). In this process, one can only depend upon oneself and one's own effort. In Jainism there is no creator God and no higher power that can aid one in reaching salvation, which in Jainism is attained by first ridding oneself of all karma, both good and bad, and by attaining "liberating wisdom" (*kevala-jnana*), which allows one to separate oneself from matter.

MAHAVIRA'S TEACHINGS.

The contemporary Jaina tradition traces itself back to Vardhamana Jnatriputra, an ascetic who was born in the northern part of modern-day Bihar in the sixth century B.C.E. This was also the area in which the Buddha lived, and the two religious leaders were said to have been familiar with each other's reputations and teachings. Both traditions rejected key elements of the dominant brahmanical system, including the sacrifices enjoined by the Vedas and the caste system, and both emphasized the goal of final liberation from cyclic existence, although they differed significantly in their paths.

Jaina scriptures contain a number of descriptions of the life and liberation of Mahavira. These emphasize his extreme asceticism, his self-control, his unshakable patience and equanimity, and his final victory. Due to his years of fighting the desires of the flesh, he gradually weaned himself of all physical desires and separated his spiritual essence from the bonds of material existence. Mahavira advocated a path of strict asceticism and non-injury (*ahimsa*) to all living things as the keys to liberation (*moksha*). By controlling desires, restraining the wandering of the senses, and limiting consumption to the minimum needed to sustain life, Mahavira eliminated all

attachments to material enjoyments, wandered naked from place to place (symbolizing his dispassion toward mundane norms and possessions), and through rigorous spiritual discipline eventually overcame any possibility of return to cyclic existence. In recognition of his hard-won victory over the temptations of the world, his followers commonly refer to him as Jina, meaning "Victor." The term Jaina means "Followers of the Victor."

Mahavira did not claim to be a religious innovator or to have discovered a new path to salvation; rather, he asserted that he was one of many who have discovered the way. According to Jaina tradition, he was the twenty-fourth Tirthankara, or "Ford-Maker," a name given by Jainas to the great ascetics who not only find the path to liberation, but also show it to others.

JAINA DOCTRINE

Asceticism. In Jaina practice, asceticism serves to discipline body and mind and is also used to burn off one's karma. Since in Jainism karma has a physical manifestation, it is not enough simply to gain knowledge: a person must also perform physical austerities in order to eradicate the physical effects of karma. In practicing monastic discipline, self-control is important, and a monk should gain firm control over his emotions and never lose his temper. No matter what others do to him—whether they speak harshly to him, injure him, or disturb him—he should never become angry at them and should always remain in control, because a moment of anger can destroy hard-won self-discipline and can lead to negative mental states and harmful actions.

An extreme aspect of Jaina asceticism is the practice of itvara or sallekhana, in which an advanced practitioner may voluntarily starve to death. This practice is said to eliminate large amounts of negative karma and may even lead to final liberation. According to legend, Mahavira himself did this, since he knew that he would be released at the end of his life and that the fast unto death would be an effective means of eliminating the last subtle vestiges of his karma. Generally a monk will prepare for this

practice through a graduated program of fasting that may last for twelve years, but if he is sick he can begin the fast without this previous training. In this passage, it is described as a difficult discipline, but the end reward is seen as a glorious culmination of one's spiritual training.

Jiva. Jain metaphysics divides the universe into two main categories, *jiva* and *ajiva*. *Jiva* refers to the life-principle that is found in all things, while *ajiva* is insentient matter, along with the categories of time and space. It is the main impediment to the release of individual *jivas*. According to Jainism, all things, even material entities, have a life force. *Jiva* is an eternal substance that adjusts in size and shape to the physical body it inhabits. Matter is non-sentient, and because of its connection with the life force, living beings inevitably suffer as a result of the fact that matter is prone to change and decay.

The *jiva*'s natural purview is universal—it is omniscient, but the senses place restrictions on it. To bring the soul to its natural omniscience, one needs to overcome the limitations imposed upon it by matter, to let the soul perceive without the constraints placed on it by the senses, which serve as blinders for the naturally

omniscient *jiva*. This leads to full and direct knowledge of all things in all aspects.

Jaina texts mention the Hindu gods on occasion, but Jaina philosophy is basically atheistic. One Jaina text considers various arguments for the existence of a creator of the universe and rejects them. This reflects a fundamental Jaina emphasis on the individual: there is no other power that is able to help the individual escape from cyclic existence—we are on our own, and every person's present position is the result of his or her own past actions. No outside power can change the results of one's karma, nor can anyone other than oneself effect one's salvation. The law of karma is absolute and operates according to its own laws, and no deity can abrogate the workings of karma. Each being must suffer the results of his or her actions, and no god can change this. It is up to the individual to work out his or her own salvation.

In Jain metaphysics, the universe is filled with life—everything possesses a soul, even plants and such apparently unliving things as stones, which are at such a low level of sentience, and so oppressed by matter, that they appear to be devoid of life. The soul is considered to be permeable, and all of one's actions lead to influxes of karma, which is seen as subtle matter that pervades the soul (as opposed to merely

covering or obscuring it). Karmic matter varies in color in accordance with the relative goodness or evil of the act committed. For instance, killing a living being, even inadvertently, leads to an influx of very dark karma (this is why many Jainas wear masks over their noses and mouths and carry brooms to sweep in front of themselves, in order to avoid inadvertently killing living beings). Beings who engage in occupations that involve a great deal of killing, such as butchers, have jet black *jivas*, which can only be cleansed through prodigious amounts of asceticism and physical mortification. Because of this, Jainas are strictly prohibited from engaging in occupations that involve the taking of life, which has kept them from being, for instance, hunters and fishermen.

Jainas also hold that each *jiva* has eternally been associated with *ajiva*, and there has never been a time when they were separated, and no "fall" through which *jiva* became associated with *ajiva*. *Jiva's* association with *ajiva* is beginningless, but it is possible to terminate it. In addition, there is no creator deity that made the world as it is—it has always been as it is and always will be, although it does go through cycles of relative degeneration and regeneration.

Liberation.

The Jaina stress the total responsibility of the individual for his or her own actions and indicate that salvation is won or lost by oneself alone. Briefly, the Jaina path begins with renunciation of worldly things, conjoined with avoidance of any action that injures another living being. These practices are also linked to yogic meditation, which allows a person to discipline the senses and emotions and to eliminate desire.

All actions lead to karmic influx, but evil actions color the *jiva* with very dark karma that is difficult to eliminate, while good or meritorious actions color the *jiva* with light karma that is easily cleansed. Elimination of karma occurs naturally, and in every moment beings are working off the effects of past actions. Most beings, however, are simultaneously creating new karma, and so the process is self-perpetuating. The only way to burn off more karma than one creates is to dedicate oneself to a program of asceticism and meditation. The karma accumulated in the *jiva* will burn off naturally, but this is a slow process. It can be aided through fasting, celibacy, and various types of ascetic practices aimed at developing *tapas* (literally "heat," the energy

one acquires through self-restraint and asceticism). This may be used to burn off karma.

The first step of the Jaina path to liberation involves halting the influx of new karma (*samvara*), which is followed by a program of cleansing the karma one has already acquired (*nirjara*). When this process is completed one attains liberation (*moksha*).

Because of past karma that has not yet been eradicated, one may still have a physical body, but this too will pass away when its past karma is exhausted. At this point, the soul is freed of its bondage to matter, and is luminous, omniscient, and completely free. It then rises toward the top of the universe (which in traditional Jaina cosmology is pictured as a giant human), and comes to rest at the base of the cranium of the universe in a realm called "World of Saints" (*siddha-loka*), where it dwells forever with the other perfected beings, completely beyond any future suffering and eternally removed from the world.

No outside force or power can aid the individual in this process. Only one's own effort can cleanse one's *jiva* of the effects of accumulated karma. Gods and other human beings are unable to help the individual, since they are similarly enmeshed in the process. Even the

Tirthankaras are unable to help (beyond providing instruction and guidance during their lifetimes), since their liberation has removed them from any concern with the world, and so they are beyond the reach of prayers and supplications.

Liberation is only possible in the realm in which humans live, which is said to be a small disk in the middle of the universe. Below this realm are various painful destinies, such as hells, and above it are the realms of demi-gods and gods. Humans are in a position superior to that of the gods, who live a long and blissful existence, and thus are unaware that when their good karma is exhausted they will inevitably sink back to the lower levels of rebirth.

SKY CLAD AND WHITE CLAD JAINS

Jainism today has two main sects, the Digambaras ("Sky Clad") and the Shvetambaras ("White Clad"). The former group believes that liberation requires renunciation of all possessions, including clothes. Digambara monks, following Mahavira's example, are expected to be completely naked, their only permitted possession a small broom used to whisk away insects before they sit or lie down.

The Shvetambaras agree that Mahavira wore no clothes, but assert that the present time is one of degeneration, and so nudity is inappropriate today. Their monks and nuns wear simple white robes, but this practice is denounced by Digambaras as indicating that they have attachments to worldly things. As a result, Digambaras hold that Shvetambara monastics are actually no more advanced spiritually than laypeople who follow the Jaina precepts.

Digambara and Shvetambara texts disagree on the spiritual aptitude of women. The Digambaras contend that women should not be permitted to go without clothing, and that since nudity is a precondition for liberation, women are unable to attain the supreme religious goal.

A woman's best hope is to follow the precepts and work toward a future rebirth as a man.

The Shvetambaras reject this idea and assert that women are able to attain liberation. Nudity, while commendable during Mahavira's time, is inappropriate today, and the wearing of simple clothes is no hindrance to liberation. Interestingly, both sects agree on the point that women should not be permitted to renounce clothing, since a woman's body is inherently sexual, and a naked woman would attract unwanted sexual desire.

The following passage is perhaps the earliest example of the Digambara doctrine that women are unable to attain liberation because of their gender. They cannot renounce clothing, they are fickle and emotional, their bodies are breeding grounds for small organisms, and their bodily processes lead to the destruction of these creatures, which is a violation of the dictates of non-injury.

These differences in monastic discipline parallel the divergences in their respective scriptural traditions. Each school has its own canon, and for the most part they do not accept the authority of the other's scriptures (although the doctrinal contents of the their texts are generally in accord). One reason for the disagreement is

the fact that the first Jaina synod was held about two centuries after Mahavira's death. The canon that resulted from this forms the core of the Digambara canon, but since it was held well after the death of the founder many texts had become lost or forgotten, and there were differing recensions of many works. In the fifth century the Shvetambaras held a council that resulted in their authoritative texts being written down and distributed to the Jaina community.

JAINA SCRIPTURES

The oldest texts of the Jaina canon were written in Prakrits, languages that were related to Sanskrit but that numerous grammatical forms and vocabulary from local dialects. In later times Jaina writers began composing texts in local vernaculars, and sometimes in Sanskrit. The most widely accepted scriptures are named "Early Texts" (*Purva*), but these are no longer extant. Jaina scholars contend that elements of these texts are incorporated into the present canons. The Digambaras, for example, contend that one of the branches of their canon, the twelfth "Limb" (*Anga*) contains portions of the Early Texts.

The Shvetambara canon is referred to as "Tradition" (*Agama*) or "Doctrine" (*Siddhanta*), and contains forty-five texts that are arranged into six divisions: (1) the Limbs; (2) Sub-Limbs (*Upanga*); (3) Miscellaneous Texts (*Prakirnaka*); (4) Treatises on Cutting (*Chedasutra*), which mostly focus on matters of discipline; (5) Appendices (*Culikasutras*); and Basic Texts (*Mulasutras*). This canon contains a variety of texts of different ages and in different languages, and some texts contain material in different dialects.

The primary texts for Digambaras are scholastic texts written by authors who lived around the first century C.E., the most important of whom are Vattakera, author of the *Basic Conduct (Mulacara)*, Kundakunda, author of the *Essence of Doctrine (Samayasara)*, and Shivarya, who wrote the *Accomplishment (Aradhana)*. Both Digambaras and Shvetambaras accept the authority of the *Treatise on Attaining the Meaning of the Principles (Tattvarthadhigama Sutra)*, a text that summarizes the key points of Jaina doctrine in 350 stanzas. In addition, both schools have extensive collections of didactic and expository works called *Supplements (Anuyoga)*, which cover a wide range of subjects, including rules for right living and dialectical debate, poetry, uplifting stories, and hymns.

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BUDDHISM

THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA.

According to traditional accounts, the Buddha was born a prince named Siddhartha Gautama in a small kingdom in what is today southern Nepal. His final incarnation was a culmination of a training program that spanned countless lifetimes, during which he gradually perfected the exalted qualities that would mark him as a buddha. Shortly after his birth, his father consulted a number of astrologers, all of whom declared that the newborn prince would become a great king and that he would rule the whole world with truth and righteousness. One astrologer, however, declared that if the prince were to see a sick person, an old person, a corpse, and a world renouncing ascetic, he would become dissatisfied with his life and become a wandering mendicant in order to seek final peace. These four things became known in Buddhism as the "four sights." The first three epitomize the problems inherent in the world, while the fourth points to the way out of the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, which is characterized by suffering and loss.

According to the Extensive Sport Sutra (Lalitavistara-sutra), Siddhartha's father, king Shuddhodana, decided to prevent his son from encountering any of the four sights and surrounded him with pleasant diversions during his early years. The prince, however, eventually convinced his father to let him visit a part of the city that lay outside the palace gates. Before allowing the prince to ride out in his chariot, Shuddhodana first ordered that the streets be cleared of all sick and old people, and that the prince not be allowed to see any corpses or world renouncers. Despite the king's efforts, however, at one point the path of the royal chariot was blocked by a sick man. Siddhartha had never before encountered serious illness, and he turned to Chandaka, his charioteer, and asked why the man appeared as he did. Chandaka informed the prince that the man had grown old and that such afflictions were the inevitable result of age. Siddhartha was amazed to find that most people see such sights every day but persist in short-sighted pursuits and mundane affairs, apparently unconcerned that they will inevitably become sick, grow old, and die.

In three subsequent journeys outside the palace, Siddhartha saw an old man and a corpse, and when he learned that eventually his young,

healthy body would become weak and decrepit he fell into a profound depression. On a fourth trip, Siddhartha saw a world renouncer, a man who stood apart from the crowd, who owned nothing and was unaffected by the petty concerns of the masses, and who radiated calm, serenity, and a profound inner peace. This sight lifted Siddhartha's spirits, since it revealed to him that there is a way to transcend the vicissitudes of mundane existence and find true happiness. Realizing the folly of remaining in the palace, Siddhartha resolved to renounce the world and find inner peace. He then declared his desire to become awakened in order to show other suffering beings a way to end suffering.

Siddhartha left the palace and subsequently practiced meditation with several teachers, but none could show him a path leading to the cessation of suffering. At one point he fell in with five spiritual seekers who told him that the way to salvation lies in severe asceticism. He followed their practices, and eventually was only eating a single grain of rice per day. After swooning due to weakness, however, Siddhartha realized that extreme asceticism is just as much a trap as the hedonistic indulgence of his early years.

Thus he left his ascetic companions behind and resolved to find a path leading to the cessation of

suffering. He recognized that he would have to discover the truth for himself. Before embarking on his final quest for truth Siddhartha made a solemn vow, to not move from the spot upon which he stood until he attained enlightenment.

Siddhartha stood in a spot that is now known as "the Circle of Awakening," located in modern-day Bodhgaya. Sitting under a tree, during the night Siddhartha entered into progressively deeper meditative states, in which the patterns of the world fell into place for him, and thus he came to understand the causes and effects of actions, why beings suffer, and how to transcend all the pains and sorrows of the world. By the dawn of the next morning he had completely awakened from the misconceptions of ordinary people.

At dawn of the following morning, full awareness arose in him, and all traces of ignorance disappeared. He had become a "*buddha*," a term derived from the Sanskrit root word *budh*, meaning to wake up or to regain consciousness. Thus he was now fully awakened from the sleep of ignorance in which most beings spend life after life. At first he thought to remain under the tree and pass away without revealing what he had understood, since he knew that the teachings of an awakened being are subtle and difficult for ordinary

beings to comprehend. As he sat there in blissful contemplation, however, the Indian god Brahma came to him, bowed down before him, and begged him to teach others. Brahma pointed out that there would be some intelligent people who would derive benefit from his teachings and that many people would find true happiness by following the path that he had discovered.

Feeling a sense of profound compassion for suffering beings, Buddha agreed to share his wisdom with them, and so embarked on a teaching career that would last for about forty years. He traveled around India, teaching all who wished to listen, and many people recognized the truth of his words and became his disciples. According to Buddhist tradition, he was an accomplished teacher who was able to perceive the proclivities and mindsets of his listeners and who could skillfully adapt his teachings for each person and group while still retaining the essential message. He had many lay disciples, but he emphasized the centrality of a monastic lifestyle for those who were intent on liberation. After a long and successful teaching career, Buddha's body had become old and wracked with constant pain. Realizing that his mission had been accomplished, Buddha decided to enter final nirvana (parinirvana). He first asked his disciples if they had any final

questions, and then told them that they should rely on the teachings they had already received. Buddha further informed them that he had told them everything of the path and the true doctrine that could be put into words, holding nothing back, and so it was now up to them to put these teachings into practice. He then told Ananda that after his death it would be permissible for monks to abolish the minor rules of monastic discipline, but Ananda neglected to ask him which these were. Buddha again exhorted his followers to rely on the teachings he had already taught them, and Ananda informed him that none of the monks present had any doubts about the doctrine, the path, or monastic discipline. According to his biography, he died in a grove of trees near the town of Vaishali at the age of eighty.

BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

Shortly after making the decision to teach, Buddha surveyed the world in order to choose a place to begin his teaching career. He decided to travel to Sarnath, where his five former companions were still practicing pointless austerities, hoping in this way to find happiness. When meeting them he delivered his first discourse, known as the "Sutra Turning the Wheel of Doctrine" because it set in motion the Buddha's teaching career. In this discourse he lays out some of the themes that would be central to his later teachings, such as the importance of following a "middle way" that avoids the extremes of sensual indulgence and extreme asceticism, and the "four noble truths": (1) that all mundane existence involves suffering; (2) that suffering is caused by desire; (3) that there can be a cessation of suffering; and (4) the eightfold noble path that leads to this cessation.

Buddha recognized that all of the world's problems begin with a fundamental ignorance (*avidya*) that causes beings to misunderstand the true nature of reality. Because of this, they engage in actions that lead to their own suffering and fail to recognize what leads to happiness. He came to understand how the lives of all beings in the world are constantly influenced by the effects of their own actions

(karma), and that seeking happiness within the changing phenomena of the mundane world is a fundamental mistake. He saw everything in the world as impermanent (*anitya*) and understood that because of the fact of constant change even things that seem to provide happiness—such as wealth, fame, power, sex, relationships—are in fact sources of suffering (*duhkha*). Nirvana is said to be the final cessation of suffering, a state beyond the cycle of birth and death. As such, it could be said to be the ultimate goal of the path taught by the Buddha, whose quest was motivated by a concern with the unsatisfactoriness of cyclic existence and a wish to find a way out of the round of suffering that characterizes the mundane world. Despite its importance, however, there are few descriptions of nirvana in Buddhist literature.

A famous Buddhist passage contains a series of questions about metaphysical topics posed to the Buddha by a wandering ascetic named Vacchagotta. The Buddha's response is interesting: he does not even try to provide answers, nor does he indicate that he does not answer because of ignorance on his part. Rather, he tells Vacchagotta that there is no point in answering the questions, since they are irrelevant to the goal of salvation. He indicates that people who spend their time pondering

such questions and arguing about philosophical conundrums are unlikely to find release from suffering, and so the wisest course of action is to avoid such questions as a waste of time.

Although there are many passages in Buddhist literature in which faith is extolled as an important virtue, this faith should ideally be based on evidence and valid reasoning. In addition, there are several places in Buddhist literature in which Buddha exhorts his listeners to examine teachers and teachings closely before putting trust in them. In the following passage, Buddha addresses a group of people collectively referred to as Kalamas, who are confused by the conflicting claims of the religious systems of their day. Buddha advises them to verify all claims themselves by examining which doctrines lead to positive results, and which lead to negative ones. The former should be adopted, and the latter rejected.

After attaining awakening, the Buddha indicated that he had come to realize that everything comes into being in dependence upon causes and conditions—a doctrine referred to in Buddhism as "dependent arising" (*pratitya-samutpada*). Indeed, all the phenomena of the universe are interconnected by relationships of mutual causality. Things come into being in dependence upon causes and conditions, abide

due to causes and conditions, and eventually pass away due to causes and conditions. Thus, the world is viewed by Buddhists as a dynamic and ever-changing system. Buddha understood that because phenomena are in a constant state of flux there is no enduring essence underlying them. Nor is there a supreme being who oversees the process of change and decides the fates of beings. Rather, every being is responsible for its own destiny, and the entire system of universal interdependent causation is driven by its own internal forces. Individual beings are what they are because of the actions they performed in the past. Buddha describes the process of causation in relation to human existence, which is said to proceed in a cyclical fashion. Because of a basic misunderstanding of the workings of reality (referred to as "ignorance"), people falsely imagine that some worldly things can bring them happiness, and thus they generate desire and try to acquire these things. Such attitudes provide the basis for the arising of negative mental states, and these states in turn provide a basis for beings to return to the world in a future birth. This next life will begin with the conditioning of the last, and so the entire cycle will repeat itself unless a person recognizes the folly of conventional wisdom and chooses to follow the Buddhist path, which is designed to provide a way out of the

trap of cyclic existence. Buddhism emphasizes the importance of meditation as a means for attaining clarity of perception, eliminating mental afflictions, and escaping from cyclic existence.

A final doctrine commonly associated with Buddha is that of selflessness (anatta) which holds that there is no enduring self, no soul, no truly existent personal identity. The most famous exposition of this is in an early text called *Questions of King Milinda*. According to Buddhist tradition, the Bactrian king Menander (Pali: Milinda) engaged the Buddhist sage Nagasena in a series of philosophical discussions in which Nagasena convinced him of the truth of Buddha's teachings, particularly the doctrine of selflessness. The king at first expresses disbelief, pointing out that he is clearly speaking to Nagasena, who seems to be a concretely existing person. Nagasena convinces the king by using the analogy of a chariot, which is composed of parts that separately are incapable of performing the functions of a chariot, but which when assembled are given the conventional designation "chariot." Similarly, human beings (and all other phenomena) are merely collections of parts that are given conventional designations, but they lack any enduring entity.

From a Buddhist perspective, the Buddha is not only important as a person who taught a corpus of texts. The events of his life serve as an inspiration to devout Buddhists, who see him as the supreme example of how meditative realization should be put into practice in daily life. He was modest, merciful and had compassion for all beings. He abstained from lying, abusive speech, gossip any kind of harm.

HINAYANA AND MAHAYANA SCHOOLS.

Shortly after his death his followers convened a council to codify the teachings of the Buddha. According to tradition, the council met in Rajagriha, a place in which Buddha had delivered many discourses. The participants were five hundred of his closest disciples who had become *arhats* (meaning that they had eradicated mental afflictions and transcended all attachment to mundane things). Such people, it was believed, would not be afflicted by faulty memories or biased by sectarian considerations.

The members of the assembly recounted what they had heard Buddha say on specific occasions, and they prefaced their remarks with the phrase, "Thus have I heard: At one time the Exalted One was residing in.... " This formula indicated that the speaker had been a member of the audience, and it provided the context and

background of the discourse. Other members would certify the veracity of the account or correct minor details, and at the end of the council all present were satisfied that the Buddha's words had been definitively recorded. The canon of Buddhism was declared closed, and the council issued a pronouncement that henceforth no new teachings would be admitted as the "word of the Buddha" (*buddha-vachana*).

Despite the intentions of the council, however, new teachings and doctrines continued to appear in the following centuries, and the Buddhist community developed numerous divisions. The most significant of these was the split into two schools termed "Hinayana," or "Lesser Vehicle" and "Mahayana," or "Greater Vehicle." These names were obviously coined by the latter group, which considered itself to be superior to its rivals because it propounded a goal of universal salvation, while the Hinayana emphasized the importance of working primarily for one's own emancipation. The Hinayana ideal is the *arhat*, a being who overcomes all ties to the phenomenal world and so attains *nirvana*, which is said to be a state beyond birth and death. It is also described as perfect bliss.

Their Mahayana rivals condemned this as a selfish and limited goal. The Mahayana ideal is

the *bodhisattva* (a being—*sattva*—whose goal is awakening—*bodhi*), who seeks to attain the state of buddhahood in order to help others to find the path to final happiness. Some early Mahayana texts have a distinctly sectarian tone, particularly when they compare the ideals of the arhat and the bodhisattva. The Mahayana parable of the burning house from the *Lotus Sutra* is a famous allegory for the practice of "skillful means" (*upaya-kaushalya*), which is one of the important abilities of bodhisattvas and buddhas. It involves adapting the dharma to the interests and proclivities of individual listeners, telling them things that will attract them to the practice of Buddhism. The question posed in the dialogue concerns whether such tactics should be considered underhanded or dishonest. The answer, not surprisingly, is no: the means used are for the good of the beings, and benefit them greatly in the long run. Moreover, with beings who are thoroughly enmeshed in the concerns of the world it is necessary to draw their attention away from mundane pleasures toward the dharma, which can lead to lasting happiness.

The Mahayana form of Buddhism later predominated in Central and East Asia—countries such as Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and China—while Hinayana schools

took hold in Southeast Asia—in such countries as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and Laos. Buddhists in these countries do not accept the designation of their tradition as a "Lesser Vehicle." Rather, they contend that the dominant Theravada tradition (the only one of the numerous schools collectively designated by the term "Hinayana" that survives today) is in fact the true teaching of Buddha. They further believe that the *Mahayanasutras* (discourses believed by Mahayanists to have been spoken by the historical Buddha) are in fact forgeries that proclaim practices and doctrines that the Buddha never taught, but which were actually falsely propounded by others long after his death.

Madhyamaka Tradition. The oldest distinctively Mahayana literature is a group of texts that discuss the "perfection of wisdom" (*prajna-paramita*). The earliest of these is probably the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines*, the oldest version of which may have been composed as early as the first century B.C.E. The Perfection of Wisdom texts do not make their appearance until several centuries after the death of the Buddha, but they claim to have been spoken by him during his lifetime. Mahayana tradition explains the chronological

discrepancy by contending that they were indeed taught by the Buddha to advanced disciples, but that he ordered that they be hidden in the underwater realm of *nagas* (beings with snakelike bodies and human heads) until the time was right for their propagation.

The legend further reports that the second-century philosopher Nagarjuna (fl. ca. 150 C.E.) was the person preordained by Buddha to recover and explicate the Perfection of Wisdom texts. After one of his lectures, some *nagas* approached him and told him of the texts hidden in their kingdom, and so Nagarjuna traveled there and returned with the sutras to India. He is credited with founding the Madhyamaka (Middle Way) school of Buddhist philosophy, which emphasized the centrality of the doctrine of emptiness. For Nagarjuna, concepts are empty because language is simply an interconnected system of terms that do not capture actual things. They simply relate to other words. One who fully recognizes this fact becomes freed from the snares of language and attains correct realization, an important part of the path to liberation. The final nature of phenomena is referred to in Mahayana texts by a variety of terms, including emptiness, suchness, reality-limit, and the ultimate. Perfection of Wisdom texts contain many warnings against

holding too rigidly to doctrines, even Buddhist doctrines. In one passage, Buddha warns his disciple Subhuti against conceiving sentient beings as truly existing, and then applies the reasoning of emptiness to other Buddhist categories.

Nagarjuna and his commentators (the most influential of whom was Chandrakirti, ca. 550-600) developed the philosophical ramifications of this doctrine, which is closely connected with the notion of dependent arising. Since all phenomena come into being as a result of causes and conditions, abide due to causes and conditions, and pass away due to causes and conditions, everything in the universe is empty of a substantial entity. Ordinary beings, however, perceive them as existing in the way that they appear—that is, as real, substantial things that inherently possess certain qualities. Nagarjuna declared that a failure to understand emptiness correctly leads to mistaken perceptions of things, and that erroneous philosophical views are the reifications of such notions. The Madhyamaka philosophers applied this insight not only to mistaken perceptions, but also to the doctrines of rival schools, which they contended were founded on self-contradictory assumptions. Through a process of dialectical reasoning, Madhyamaka thinkers

exposed both Buddhist and non-Buddhist systems of thought to a rigorous critique, the goal of which was to lead people to recognize the ultimate futility of attempting to encapsulate truth in philosophical propositions.

Yogachara Tradition. Approximately two centuries after Nagarjuna, a new Mahayana school arose in India, which is commonly known as the Yogic Practice School (*Yogachara*). The main scriptural source for this school is the *Sutra Explaining the Thought (Samdhinirmochana-sutra)*, which consists of a series of questions put to the Buddha by a group of bodhisattvas. The name "Yogic Practice School" may have been derived from an important treatise by Asanga (ca. 310-390) entitled *the Levels of Yogic Practice (Yogachara-bhumi)*. Along with his brother Vasubandhu (ca. 320-400), Asanga is credited with founding this school and developing its central doctrines. Yogachara emphasizes the importance of meditative practice, and several passages in Yogachara texts indicate that the founders of the school perceived other Mahayana Buddhists as being overly concerned with dialectical debate while neglecting meditation. The Yogachara school is commonly referred to in Tibet as "Mind Only"

(*sems tsam*; Sanskrit: *chitta-matra*) because of an idea found in some Yogachara texts that all the phenomena of the world are "cognition-only" (*vijnapti-matra*), implying that everything we perceive is conditioned by consciousness.

The *Sutra Explaining the Thought* is one of the earliest descriptions of the "basis consciousness" (*alaya-vijnana*), a doctrine that was central to the Yogachara school and that was also influential in other Mahayana countries, particularly Tibet and China. The basis consciousness is the most fundamental level of mind, and it is said to be comprised of the "seeds" of past actions and mental states. The seeds become part of the continuum of the basis consciousness, which is moved along by their force. If one cultivates positive actions and thoughts, for example, one's mind will become habituated to positive actions and thoughts. The converse is true of those who engage in negative actions and thoughts. Under appropriate conditions, the seeds give rise to corresponding thoughts and emotions, and these are the phenomena of ordinary experience. Mind and its objects are said to arise together, and so there is no substantial difference between subject and object. Because of this, phenomena are said to be "cognition-only" (*vijnapti-matra*),

meaning that all we ever perceive are mental impressions, and not things in themselves.

In the following centuries, a number of syncretic schools developed. They tended to mingle Madhyamaka and Yogachara doctrines. The greatest examples of this syncretic period are the philosophers Shantarakshita (ca. 680-740) and Kamalashila (ca. 740-790), who are among the last significant Buddhist philosophers in India.

Tantra. In addition to these developments in philosophy, sometime around the sixth or seventh century a new trend in practice developed in India, which was written down in texts called *tantras*. These texts purported to have been spoken by the historical Buddha (or sometimes by other buddhas), and while they incorporated the traditional Mahayana ideal of the bodhisattva who seeks buddhahood for the benefit of all beings, they also proposed some radically new practices and paradigms. The central practices of *tantra* include visualizations intended to foster cognitive reorientation, the use of prayers (*mantra*) to buddhas that are intended to facilitate the transformation of the meditator into a fully enlightened buddha, and often elaborate rituals.

Tantric texts claim that the system of tantra skillfully uses aspects of reality that cause bondage for people who are enmeshed in mundane conceptuality—things like desire and other negative emotions. These may serve as aids to the path of liberation if the proper means are used. In the tantric practice of deity yoga (*devata-yoga*), meditators first visualize buddhas in front of themselves (this is referred to as the "generation stage," *utpanna-krama*), and then they invite the buddhas to merge with them, a process that symbolically transforms them into buddhas (this is referred to as the "completion stage," *nishpanna-krama*). The practice of deity yoga is intended to help meditators to become familiar with having the body, speech, and mind of buddhas, and with performing the compassionate activities of buddhas. Because meditators train in the desired effect of buddhahood, the path of tantra is said by its adherents to be much shorter than that of traditional Mahayana, which was said to require a minimum of three "countless eons" (*asamkhyeya-kalpa*) to complete. With the special practices of tantra, it is said to be possible to become a buddha in as little as one human lifetime.

Tantric adepts claim that the fact that tantra uses emotions like desire as means in the path is

an example of the skillful practices of the system. In his *Commentary on the Samputa Tantra*, Viryavajra contends that there are four levels of the use of desire: visualizing a man and woman looking at each other; laughing with each other; holding hands; and sexual union. Each of these represents a progressively higher level of desire. One should engage in these practices, however, in order to utilize the energy of desire as a force that can be used to eradicate mental afflictions. The skillful use of desire is said in some texts to be like rubbing two sticks together to make a fire, which then consumes the sticks themselves. In this case, the process is compared to the way that insects are born in wood, and then later consume the wood.

The special techniques of tantra are said to be very powerful, but they can also be dangerous. Thus tantric texts warn meditators to find qualified spiritual guides (guru) who can help them to avoid possible pitfalls. One of the central practices of tantra is "guru yoga," in which one visualizes one's guru as a fully enlightened buddha. One who does this successfully is said to move quickly toward actualization of buddhahood

THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM OUTSIDE OF INDIA

Following this last flowering of Buddhist thought in India, Buddhism began to decline. It became increasingly a tradition of elite scholar-monks who studied in great monastic universities like Nalanda and Vikramashila in northern India. Buddhism failed to adapt to changing social and political circumstances, and apparently lacked a wide base of support. Thus, when a series of invasions by Turkish Muslims descended on India in the ninth through twelfth centuries, after the invaders had sacked the great north Indian monastic universities and killed many prominent monks, Buddhism was dealt a death blow from which it never recovered. However, from as early as the 3rd century B.C.E. Buddhism made its way into the countries surrounding India, ensuring its survival.

South East Asia and China

The first major export of Buddhism was championed by Ashoka (270-232), the third of the Mauryan kings who created the first pan-Indian empire. Ashoka was converted to Buddhism by a Theravada monk and, after a bloody war of conquest against the neighboring state of Kalinga, he recognized that such aggression violated the principles of Buddhism. From this point on he renounced war as an instrument of foreign policy. He began to implement Buddhist principles in the administration of the kingdom and, in order to inform the populace of his political and ruling philosophy, he had edicts inscribed on stone pillars and placed throughout his kingdom. A number of them still survive today. His reign is considered by Buddhists to have been a model of good government, one that was informed by Buddhist principles of righteousness and respect for life.

His advocacy of Buddhism was one of the primary reasons for the spread of the tradition into Southeast Asia. He sent teams of missionaries all over the Indian sub-continent, and to Sri Lanka, Burma, and other neighboring areas. Due to Ashoka's influence and personal power, the missionaries were generally well-received in the countries they

visited, and they were often successful in convincing people to convert to Buddhism. One of the most successful of the missions he sponsored was led by his son Mahinda, who traveled to Sri Lanka along with four other monks and a novice. According to Buddhist tradition, the mission was so successful that the king of Sri Lanka became a Buddhist, and Mahinda then supervised the translation of the Theravada canon (written in the Pali language) into Sinhala. He also helped to found a monastery that was named the Mahavihara, which became the main bastion of Theravada orthodoxy on Sri Lanka for over 1,000 years.

It is unclear exactly when Buddhist first arrived in East Asia. China was the first country in the region to record contact with Buddhism: a royal edict issued in 65 C.E. reports that a prince in what is now northern Kiangsu Province performed Buddhist sacrifices and entertained Buddhist monks and laypeople. The earliest Buddhists in China were probably from Central Asia, and for centuries Buddhism was widely perceived as a religion of foreigners. In 148 C.E. a monk named An Shih-kao, from the Central Asian kingdom of Kusha, began translating Indian Buddhist texts into Chinese in Lo-yang, which was to become the capital of the later Han dynasty. An Shih-kao and a number of other

monks (mostly from Central Asia) translated about thirty Buddhist texts during the next three decades. The early translators used a translation system termed "matching concepts" (*ko-i*), which was to have important ramifications for the development of Chinese Buddhism. Realizing that China had a highly developed culture and that Chinese tended to view people from other countries as uncouth barbarians, the early translators used indigenous terminology—particularly Taoist terminology—to translate Sanskrit technical terms. One result of this practice was that it made many foreign ideas more palatable to Chinese readers, but it also inevitably colored the translations to such an extent that for the first few centuries after Buddhism's arrival in China, many Chinese believed it to be another version of Taoism.

Japan. In later centuries, Chinese Buddhism developed its own identity, and from China Buddhism was passed on to Korea and Japan. In 552, according to the *Nihonshoki*, the Korean state of Paekche sent Buddhist texts and images to Japan, hoping to persuade the Japanese emperor to become an ally in its war with the neighboring state of Silla. Some members of the Soga clan wanted to worship the buddha as a

powerful foreign god (*kami*), hoping by this to gain influence by associating themselves with what they believed to be a deity of the powerful Chinese empire. The early Japanese interest in Buddhism was mostly connected with purported magical powers of buddhas and Buddhist monks, but after the emperor Yomei (r. 585-587) converted to Buddhism the Japanese began to travel to China in order to study with Buddhist teachers there, and indigenous Buddhist schools developed in Japan. Yomei's son Prince Shotoku (574-622) enthusiastically propagated Buddhism. He is credited with building numerous Buddhist temples and with sponsoring Japanese monks to travel to China for study. He is also the author of commentaries on three Buddhist texts. In later times he was viewed in Japan as an incarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

Esoteric Buddhism also made its way into Japan, championed by Kukai (774-835), posthumously known as Kobo Daishi, one of the most influential thinkers of the Heian period (794-1185). He traveled to China in 804 to study Buddhism, and learned the doctrines and practices of Esoteric Buddhism (Chinese: Chen-yen; Japanese: Shingon) with the Chinese master Hui-kuo. This school is a branch of Vajrayana ("Vajra Vehicle"), which is based on the tantras of Indian Buddhism. Like its

counterparts in South Asia, East Asian Esoteric Buddhism emphasizes the importance of visualizations, mantras, and rituals for bringing about a cognitive transformation of one's mind into the mind of a buddha. Kukai compares the path of Esoteric Buddhism to that of Exoteric Buddhism. He contends that Esoteric Buddhism is far superior to the Exoteric teachings and practices and that it is more effective in bringing about mundane benefits as well as final awakening. Kukai believed that human beings have the capacity to become "awakened in this very body" (sokushin jobutsu) and that the rituals and symbols of Esoteric Buddhism appeal directly to their basic nature of buddha-potential and enable them quickly to attain the state of buddhahood. These practices bring the body, speech, and mind of the meditator into concordance with those of the truth body, and thus allow the primordial buddha Mahavairochana to communicate directly with advanced practitioners.

Nichiren (1222-1282) was one of the most charismatic figures of Japanese Buddhism. Initially trained in the Tendai school, he became disenchanted with its doctrines and practices, considering them to be inappropriate to the current age, which he believed to be the "age of degenerate dharma" (Japanese: mappo) that the

Buddha had predicted would begin 1,500 years after his death. Many Japanese Buddhists of the Kamakura period (1185-1333) believed that the turmoils of the time indicated that the final age of dharma had arrived, and a number of teachers believed that in such a time new models and practices were required. Since in the final age people become progressively more degenerate, Nichiren contended that the practices of the past—including intensive meditation practice and adherence to monastic vows—were no longer possible for most people, and thus simpler and more effective practices, appropriate to mappo, were required. Nichiren focused on the Lotus Sutra (Saddharma-pundarika-sutra) as the only viable teaching for mappo, and he counseled his followers to place all of their faith in it. Its teachings, however, were deemed too profound for most people to understand, and so Nichiren developed the practice of chanting the title of the sutra (Namu Myohorengekyo in Japanese) and trusting to the saving power of the sutra to bring worldly benefits and final salvation.

The Pure Land (Chinese: Ching-t'u; Japanese: Jodo) tradition focuses on a buddha named Amitabha ("Limitless Light") or Amitayus ("Limitless Life"), who as a merchant named Dharmakara is said to have made a series of

vows concerning the sort of "buddha-land" he will create after his attainment of buddhahood. In the *Sutra on the Array of the Joyous Land* (Sukhavati-vyuha-sutra), the author Dharmakara indicates that his land will be especially wonderful, a place in which the conditions for buddhahood are optimal. Beings fortunate to be born into this land will receive teachings from buddhas and bodhisattvas, and they will quickly progress toward awakening. He also teaches that beings may be reborn in his land if they have sincere faith in him. Shinran (1173-1262), a Japanese Pure Land teacher, writes that anyone may be reborn in Amitabha's paradise, regardless of past actions. Previous teachers had contended that birth in Sukhavati required good moral character and constant repetition of the formula, "Praise to Amida Buddha" (Namu Amida Butsu), but Shinran declared that all that is necessary is one moment of sincere belief (shinjin, literally "believing mind"). Shinran makes a distinction between "self-power," which characterizes the practices of early Buddhism, and "other-power," in which one relies completely on the saving power of Amitabha. Shinran contends that the former practice was appropriate in the Buddha's day, but in the present age is one of degeneration, and so human beings have become so depraved that their only hope is to rely on Amitabha.

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Tibet. During the reign of the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen (740-798), the Indian scholar Shantarakshita traveled to Tibet, but opposition from some of the king's ministers forced him to leave. Before departing, he urged the king to invite the tantric adept Padmasambhava. Upon his arrival in Tibet, Padmasambhava claimed that Shantarakshita's efforts had been frustrated by the country's demons. Padmasambhava then challenged the demons to personal combat, and none were able to defeat him. This so impressed the king and his court that Shantarakshita was invited back at Padmasambhava's urging, and the first monastery in Tibet was built at Samye. This marked the beginning of the "first dissemination" of Buddhism to Tibet, which ended when the devout Buddhist king Relbachen (815-836) was assassinated. His death in 836 marked the beginning of an interregnum period for Tibetan Buddhism, which ended in 1042 when Atisha (982-1054, one of the directors of the monastic university of Nalanda, traveled to Tibet. This is considered by Tibetan historians to mark the beginning of the "second dissemination" of Buddhism to Tibet. Atisha was so successful in bringing the dharma to

Tibet that Buddhism quickly became the dominant religious tradition in the country.

Tibetan Buddhism has four main schools: the Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Geluk. The "great completion" (dzogchen) tradition of Tibetan Buddhism is practiced by all of the schools but most closely associated with the Nyingma. In this system all phenomena are said to be creations of mind that, like mind, are a union of luminosity and emptiness. In the following passage, the appearances of things to the mind are compared to the reflections of forms in a mirror. Niguma is said by Tibetan tradition to have been the founder of the Shangpa lineage of the Kagyu tradition. She describes the view of mahamudra (literally, "great seal"), which is said by the Kagyu school to be the supreme form of Buddhist practice. In mahamudra, one dispenses with the visualizations and rituals of tantra and focuses on the natural state of mind, which is said to be a union of clear light and emptiness. All phenomena are viewed as the spontaneous play of mind, and by cultivating this awareness it is said that the meditator moves quickly toward the attainment of buddhahood.

The Sakya school teaches that there are three main levels of awareness, which are summarized in the following stanzas from Virupa's Vajra

Verses;. The first verse refers to the perceptions of ordinary beings, which are colored by ignorance and mental affliction. The second verse describes the perceptions of people on the path, who have some experience with meditation and thus have overcome some of their mental afflictions. The final verse indicates that buddhas perceive the world unafflicted by ignorance, hatred, desire, etc. and so are at the level of the "pure appearance." The Sakya tradition stresses that although they appear to be incompatible, the three appearances are fundamentally non-different.

For sentient beings with the afflictions is the impure appearance.

For the meditator with transic absorption is the appearance of experience.

For the ornamental wheel of the Sugata's [Buddha's] inexhaustible enlightened body, voice and mind is the pure appearance.

[Rdo rje tshigs rkang, ch. 1]

The following verses, according to the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, were spoken to Gunga Nyingpo (1092-1158, the "Great

Sakyapa" (Sachen). They are a summary of the entire Buddhist path, including the renunciation of the world, the development of compassion, and the importance of avoiding extreme views.

If you cling to this life, then you are not a dharma practitioner.

If you cling to existence, then you do not have renunciation.

If you are attached to your own interests, then you do not have the mind of enlightenment.

If you hold to [a position], then you do not have the correct view.

[Zhen pa bzhi bral]

Tsong Khapa, the founder of the Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, outlines a seven step program for developing the "mind of enlightenment," which marks the beginning of the bodhisattva path. Ordinary beings are consumed by self-centered desires and think primarily of their own narrow interests. Bodhisattvas spend countless eons working toward buddhahood for the benefit of all beings,

cheerfully accepting all the tribulations that occur along the path. Given the vast gulf between the attitudes of bodhisattvas and ordinary beings, it is difficult to for people enmeshed in mundane concerns to imagine making the transition to true altruism. The seven step program begins by recognizing that because one has been reborn in an infinite variety of situations since beginningless time, one has been in every possible relationship with every other sentient being. Thus, every sentient being has been one's mother, and has been a nurturing and caring friend. One should reflect on the kindness of one's own mother, and then think that every other being has been equally kind. One then resolves to repay this kindness, and generates a feeling of love toward others, wishing that they have happiness and the causes of happiness. One then develops compassion for sentient beings, since they are experiencing suffering as a result of contaminated actions and afflictions. In the next stage one attains the "unusual attitude," which involves vowing to work to free all beings from suffering and establish them in buddhahood. The final step is attainment of the mind of enlightenment, which is a resolve to do whatever is necessary to attain buddhahood in order to help all sentient beings.

A Tibetan classic attributed to Padmasambhava describes the "intermediate state" that all beings are said to enter after death. During the process of dying, the physiological changes that occur are accompanied by mental changes in which the coarser levels of mind drop away, revealing progressively more subtle aspects of consciousness. At the moment of death, the most subtle level of mind dawns. This is called the "mind of clear light," and compared to it all other minds are adventitious. At this point one enters the intermediate state and experiences strange and terrifying sights. These are all said to be aspects of one's own mind, and they include visions of mild and terrifying beings, deafening sounds, and other intense sense experiences. The intermediate state is a time of great opportunity, however, and if one is able to maintain awareness and focus on the clear light nature of mind and perceive all experiences as merely aspects of mind, one may become a buddha, or at least attain rebirth in the pure land of a buddha. In such places the conditions are optimal for beings who seek buddhahood. If one is unable to maintain mindfulness, one will be reborn in accordance with one's accumulated karma.

Milarepa, one of the most influential figures in Tibetan Buddhism, was born into a fairly well-

to-do family, but his greedy aunt and uncle took everything away from him, his mother, and sister. Overcome by rage, his mother coerced Milarepa into learning black magic and sending a curse on the aunt and uncle, with the result that a number of people died, but not the primary objects of his revenge. Milarepa, terrified of the consequences of his evil deeds, searched for a spiritual guide (lama) who could help him escape the consequences of his actions. He eventually found Marpa, who gave Milarepa a series of difficult and dispiriting tasks, which cleansed his negative karma. After this Milarepa spent many years living in a cave and practicing solitary meditation, which culminated in his attainment of awakening. He is considered in Tibet to be the supreme example of the attainment of buddhahood in one lifetime through tantric practice.

Buddhism Today.

Today Buddhism continues to flourish in Asia, despite such setbacks as the suppression of religion in China since the inauguration of the People's Republic of China. The current government follows Karl Marx's notion that religion is "the opiate of the masses" and an impediment to social development. In recent years government persecution of Buddhism has eased somewhat, and currently it is enjoying increased support from the Chinese populace. The government is also allowing young people to become ordained as Buddhist monks and nuns. Buddhism is becoming increasingly popular in Western countries, and a number of prominent Buddhist teachers have established successful centers in Europe and North America. The Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Sogyal Rinpoche, a number of Zen masters (*roshi*), and Theravada meditation teachers have attracted substantial followings outside of Asia, and books and articles about Buddhism are appearing with increasing frequency in Western countries.

CH'AN AND ZEN.

The Ch'an (Japanese: Zen) school developed in China. Asserting that the teachings of the school were a "special transmission outside of the scriptures," Zen masters claimed that their tradition represents the authentic teaching of the Buddha, who is said to have passed on the essence of his enlightened mind to his disciple Mahakashyapa. He in turn passed it on to his main disciple, and so it continued in India through an unbroken chain of transmission until Bodhidharma, the last Indian "patriarch," traveled to China. Bodhidharma, a semi-legendary figure, is said to have arrived at the Shao-lin monastery in China, where he sat in silent meditation in front of a wall for several years. At the end of this period, he began teaching the tradition to Chinese disciples, one of whom became the first Chinese patriarch.

An important early figure in the development of Ch'an is Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch. He describes many of the important doctrines of the developed Ch'an tradition, including the doctrine of "sudden enlightenment," which holds that buddhas become enlightened in a flash of insight, and not gradually, as traditional Indian Buddhism taught. According to Indian Buddhist meditation texts, meditators should enter into concentrated meditative states called

samadhi, and these states lead to the awakening of wisdom (prajna). Hui-neng, however, declared that such ideas impose a false dualism onto the path to buddhahood. He contended that both concentration and wisdom are present in every moment of thought and that they cannot legitimately be separated. He also opposed the goal-oriented practices of traditional Mahayana, and said that one becomes awakened by eliminating discursive thought. When all conceptual thoughts drop away and one attains the state of "no-thought" (wu nien), the mind flows freely and unimpededly, in harmony with the rhythms of the world. This is the state of mind characteristic of buddhahood, and any notions of "path" and "goal," or "cultivation" and "attainment" are products of dualistic thinking that will impede one's progress toward awakening.

Ch'an and Zen later split into two distinct schools: the Soto (Chinese: Ts'ao-tung), and the Rinzai (Chinese: Lin-chi). Dogen (1200-1253), founder of the Soto (Chinese: Ts'ao-tung) school of Zen, traveled to China in 1223 and studied with Ju-ching, a Chinese Ch'an master. One day during meditation practice, another monk fell asleep, and Ju-ching woke him up, admonishing him to practice meditation diligently in order to "drop off body and mind" (Japanese: shinjin

datsuraku), an idea that became a cornerstone of Dogen's system of meditative practice. The following passage contains instructions on meditation practice (zazen), which in Dogen's system is based on the experience of "not thinking" (hishiryo). In the state of not thinking, a meditator moves beyond discursive and dichotomizing thought (shiryo), transcends the tendency to stop ordinary thought by suppressing it (fushiryo), and thus enters into a spontaneous awareness of reality in which thoughts flow along of their own accord. In this state of spontaneous mindfulness, the meditator experiences his or her own "buddha nature," an inherent propensity toward enlightenment that is shared by all beings.

The Rinzai (Chinese: Lin-chi) school of Zen is renowned for its use of koan, riddles that cannot be answered by rational or discursive modes of thought. The following passage contains the koan that is generally given to beginning students, referred to as the "Mu koan." It reports that a monk asked the Zen master Joshu if a dog has the buddha nature, to which Joshu answered, "Mu!" Mu may be translated as "not," but in the koan Joshu's answer is not a denial, but rather an indication that the question makes no sense from the point of view of enlightenment. The dilemma behind the

question is based on traditional Japanese Buddhist ideas about the path. It is widely accepted in Japanese Buddhism that all beings—including dogs—have the buddha nature, or an inherent potential for buddhahood. Thus, from the point of view of tradition, Joshu's answer should be "Yes." But since Zen claims to transcend blind adherence to tradition, this would be an unacceptable answer. On the other hand, if Joshu were to state that dogs do not have the buddha nature, he could be accused of contravening Buddhist doctrine and setting himself above the buddhas.

Thus Joshu's answer is an invitation to move beyond tradition and conceptualization to a direct perception of truth. The Zen tradition refers to this koan as the "closed opening" or the "gateless barrier," because once a meditator perceives the meaning behind Joshu's statement, this marks the first dawning of realization that will eventually culminate in full awakening, referred to in Zen as "satori." It is intended to cause a cognitive crisis as the meditator attempts to solve the riddle by means of conceptual thought, but finds all such attempts utterly frustrated. This leads to the development of the "great doubt" (daigi), which is said to burn inside of one like a red-hot ball of iron. When the koan is solved, however, the pain and

frustration disappear, and are replaced by a serene, non-conceptual awareness.

WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

When Buddha began his teaching career, his first disciples were monks, but eventually some women became Buddhists and began to desire ordination as nuns. The woman who put the request to Buddha was Mahaprajapati Gautami, who had raised him after his mother died. Buddha first refused her request, but after she obtained the support of Ananda, Buddha's personal assistant, he eventually agreed, but added that the decision to admit nuns into the order would shorten the period of "true dharma" by 500 years. It seems clear from the passage, however, that this is not due to any inherent inferiority on the part of women, since Buddha asserts that women are capable of following the spiritual path and attaining the fruits of meditative training. Some commentators speculate that the reason for his refusal may have been that his early followers were homeless wanderers, and so there were no adequate facilities for separating men and women. Because of the pervasiveness and strength of sexual desire, groups of men and women in close proximity inevitably develop attractions and tensions, which lead to conflict. Whatever the reasons for his initial reluctance, Buddha did eventually ordain women, but he added the condition that nuns must observe

eight additional rules. After the Buddha agreed to create an order of nuns, a number of women took monastic vows, and some were eventually recognized as advanced meditators.

The Songs of the Nuns (Therigatha) collection contains a wealth of information on the religious lives of the early Buddhist nuns. Their biographies describe their struggles and tribulations, and many indicate that they saw monastic ordination as a way to escape the drudgery of household work and loveless marriages. One such nun was Patachara, who became an arhati (a female arhat). Her early biography is recounted in the *Songs of the Nuns*, and it graphically illustrates the problems of cyclic existence. Her entire family is killed one by one under tragic circumstances, and she is driven to the brink of madness. In a state of utter despair, she meets the Buddha, who counsels her and allows her to become a nun. After years of meditative practice, she severs all attachments to worldly things, recognizing them as a source of suffering. The following passage was written by an anonymous nun who celebrates her liberation from sorrow, and it praises her teacher, a fellow nun who showed her the path. The following poem was written by the mother of Sumangala (a monk who became an arhat). She was the wife of a poor umbrella

maker who left her home and became a nun. Later she attained the level of arhathood, which she celebrates in these verses.

Free, I am free!

I am completely free from my kitchen pestle!

[I am free from] my worthless husband and even his sun umbrella!

And my pot that smells like a water snake!

I have eliminated all desire and hatred,

Going to the base of a tree, [I think,] 'What happiness!'

**And contemplate this happiness.
[*Therigatha*, psalm 22]**

An important Mahayana text (Vimalakirti-nirdesha-sutra, ch. 6) describes the differences between men and women. The dialogue below applies the doctrine of emptiness to the commonly accepted differences between men and women. When these are closely examined, they are found to be merely the results of misguided conceptuality, since there is no inherently existent difference between the sexes.

The dialogue occurs in the house of Vimalakirti, a lay bodhisattva who is pretending to be sick in order to initiate a discourse on the dharma. The Buddha's disciples follow Manjushri—an advanced bodhisattva who is said to embody wisdom—to Vimalakirti's house in order to hear the two discuss the perfection of wisdom. The interchange is so profound that a young goddess who lives in Vimalakirti's house rains down flowers on the assembly. The Hinayana monks who are present try frantically to brush them off, because monks are forbidden in the Vinaya to wear flowers or adornments. The bodhisattvas in the audience, however, are unaffected by such rigid adherence to rules, and so the flowers fall from their robes.

This causes Shariputra—described in Pali texts as the most advanced of Buddha's Hinayana disciples in the development of wisdom—to marvel at the attainments of the goddess and the bodhisattvas. She chides him for viewing the fruits of meditative training as things to be acquired, and in response Shariputra asks her why she does not change from a woman into a man. The question appears to be based on traditional Indian perceptions of authority, according to which wisdom is associated with elder males. The goddess violates these principles, because she is young and female. But

it is clear from the dialogue that she is very advanced in understanding the perfection of wisdom.

The goddess responds to Shariputra's challenge by turning him into a woman and herself into a man. This leads to one of the most poignant scenes in the sutra, in which Shariputra experiences discomfort in his new body, apparently because of the Vinaya injunctions preventing monks from physical contact with women. Shariputra, now in a woman's body, is unable to avoid such contact, and tells the goddess that he is a woman without being a woman. The goddess replies that all women are women without being women, because "woman" is merely a conventional designation with no ultimate referent.

One of the notable features of the tantric movement is an emphasis on the spiritual capacities of women. Classical Indian literature indicates that extreme misogyny was prevalent in the society, which makes this aspect of tantra even more significant. An example of the emphasis on the equality of women is the fact that one of the basic vows required of all tantric practitioners is a pledge not to denigrate women, "who are the bearers of wisdom." The following passage from the Chandamaharoshana Tantra

expresses a similar sentiment in its praises of women.

One should honor women.

Women are heaven, women are truth,

Women are the supreme fire of transformation.

Women are Buddha, women are the religious community.

Women are the perfection of wisdom.

[*Chandamaharoshana-tantra*, p. 33]

BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES.

The early Buddhist canon is traditionally referred to as the "Three Baskets" (*tripitaka*; Pali: *tipitaka*), consisting of: (1) *vinaya*: rules of conduct, which are mainly concerned with the regulation of the monastic order; (2) *sutras*: discourses purportedly spoken by the Buddha, and sometimes by his immediate disciples; and (3) *abhidharma*, which includes scholastic treatises that codify and interpret the teachings attributed to the Buddha. According to Buddhist tradition, this division was instituted at the first council. This canon was written in a language called Pali, which is believed to have been derived from a dialect used in the region of Magadha. A second council introduced some modifications to the rules of monastic discipline, and later councils added other texts to the canon.

At first the canon was transmitted orally, but after a time of political and social turmoil King Vattagamani of Sri Lanka ordered that it be committed to writing. This was accomplished between 35 and 32 B.C.E. The *sutras* and *vinaya* were written in Pali, but some of the commentaries were in Sinhala. The Sinhala texts were translated into Pali in the fifth century C.E.

The *Vinaya* section of the Pali canon consists of rules of conduct, most of which are aimed at monks and nuns. Many of these are derived from specific cases in which the Buddha was asked for a ruling on the conduct of particular members of the order, and the general rules he promulgated still serve as the basis for monastic conduct.

The *Sutra* (Pali: *Sutta*) section of the Pali canon is traditionally divided into five "groupings" (*nikaya*): (1) the "long" (*digha*) discourses; (2) the "medium length" (*majjhima*) discourses; (3) the "grouped" (*samyutta*) discourses; (4) the "enumerated" (*anguttara*) discourses, which are arranged according to the enumerations of their topics; and (5) the "minor" (*khuddaka*) discourses, which comprise the largest section of the canon and the one that contains the widest variety of materials. It includes stories of the Buddha's former births (*Jataka*), which report how he gradually perfected the exalted qualities of a buddha; accounts of the lives of the great disciples (*apadana*); didactic verses (*gatha*); an influential work entitled the *Path of Truth* (*Dhammapada*); and a number of other important texts.

The *Abhidharma* (Pali: *abhidhamma*) section includes seven treatises, which organize the doctrines of particular classes of Buddha's

discourses. The *Abhidharma* writers attempted to systematize the profusion of teachings attributed to Buddha into a coherent philosophy. Their texts classify experience in terms of impermanent groupings of factors referred to as *dharma* (Pali: *dhamma*), which in aggregations are the focus of the doctrine (*dharma*) taught by Buddha. They are simple real things, indivisible into something more basic. Collections of *dharmas* are the phenomena of experience. Everything in the world—people, animals, plants, inanimate objects—consists of impermanent groupings of *dharmas*. Thus nothing possesses an underlying soul or essence. The collections of *dharmas* are changing in every moment, and so all of reality is viewed as a vast interconnected network of change and interlinking causes and conditions.

Other early schools developed their own distinctive canons, many of which have very different collections of texts, although the doctrines and practices they contain are similar. Some schools, such as the Sarvastivadins, used Sanskrit for their canons, but today only fragments of these collections exist, mostly in Chinese translations. Although Mahayana schools developed an impressive literature, there does not seem to have been an attempt to create a Mahayana canon in India. The surviving

Mahayana canons were all compiled in other countries.

Canons compiled in Mahayana countries contain much of the material of the Pali canon, but they also include Mahayana sutras and other texts not found in the Pali canon. The Tibetan canon, for example, contains a wealth of Mahayana sutras translated from Sanskrit, treatises (*shastra*) by important Indian Buddhist thinkers, *tantras* and tantric commentaries, and miscellaneous writings that were deemed important enough to include in the canon. The Chinese canon also contains Mahayana sutras, Indian philosophical treatises, and a variety of other texts, but its compilation was much less systematic than that of the Tibetan canon. The Tibetan translators had access to a much wider range of literature, due to the fact that the canon was collected in Tibet many centuries after the Chinese one. In addition, Buddhist literature came to China in a rather haphazard way. The transmission of Buddhist texts to China occurred over the course of several centuries, and during this time the tradition in India was developing and creating new schools and doctrines.

The Chinese canon was transmitted to Korea and Japan. Tibet and Mongolia both follow the Tibetan canon, which according to tradition was

redacted and codified by Pudön (1290-1364). The Theravada countries of Southeast Asia follow the Pali canon and generally consider the texts of Mahayana to be heterodox.

In addition to this canonical literature, each school of Buddhism has created literature that it considers to be authoritative. In the selections below we provide examples of such texts from a wide range of schools and periods of Buddhist literature, but the vast scope of canonical and extra-canonical literature prevents us from including many important works. The selections are intended to present a representative sampling of early texts that contain central doctrines or that recount important events in the history of Buddhism, along with statements by Buddhist thinkers of later times that represent influential developments in Buddhist thought and practice.

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SIKHISM

LIFE OF NANAK.

Early one morning in 1499 Nanak (1469-1539) went to a nearby river to perform his ritual ablutions, but he disappeared. When he failed to return, search parties were sent out, but all they found were his clothes on the bank of the river. Assuming that the current had carried Nanak away, they returned to town and reported the news. Several days later, however, Nanak reappeared, and after refusing to speak for three days he told his friends and family that he had been taken to the presence of God and given a mission: to teach Hindus and Muslims that both groups in fact worship the same God. God, he said, was distressed by the sectarian violence perpetrated in His name in India and wanted Nanak to call his followers from rigid adherence to dogmas and the performance of empty rituals to the true essence of religion, which is only known by those who move beyond external observances like ceremonies, prayers, pilgrimages, and study to the rich inner life of true spirituality. This is characterized by selfless devotion (*bhakti*) to God.

Nanak summarized God's message with the statement, "There is neither Hindu nor Muslim, so whose path should I follow" I will follow God's path, and God is neither Hindu nor Muslim." These words were the cornerstone of his later speeches and writings, in which he stressed the unity of God and the idea that the differences in how religions characterize Him are merely due to human failure to grasp the divine essence. Nanak further contended that there is no reason for religious groups to fight each other, since any system is necessarily limited, and all theological ideas are inadequate.

After his meeting with God, Sikh texts refer to Nanak as "Guru," a teacher and devotee of God. Throughout his life he worked to reconcile Hindus and Muslims, to teach them that God is everywhere and continually calls his creatures to experience Him directly and intuitively. This cannot be accomplished by those who rely on external religious observances, and is only found by practitioners of pure devotion who open themselves to the divine call and experience mystical union.

Nanak taught that devotion is the highest form of religious practice, but also the most difficult. The ego is a powerful force in human beings, and it causes us to recoil from the experience of union, in which all sense of individuality is swept

away by a transcendent vision of the divine presence.

Nanak belonged to a widespread but unorganized group of mystics known as Sants, whose members stressed the unity of God and criticized both Hindus and Muslims for being overly concerned with the external aspects of their traditions, while failing to recognize that all theistic religions worship the same ultimate source of all being. The greatest early exponent of this tradition was Kabir, a weaver from Varanasi. He was born into a Muslim family that converted from Hinduism, but his writings indicate that he saw himself as having transcended any sectarian affiliation.

A central theme of Kabir's poems is a rejection of the value of study and prayer as performed by the religious leaders of his day, who are characterized as holding to letter without grasping the true meaning. He accuses both Muslim and Hindu religious leaders of hypocrisy and with failing to grasp the true essence of religion. Hindu *pandits* (religious scholars) are portrayed as being mainly concerned with profit and position, with empty ceremonies and merely external observances. Muslim clerics, he contends, tend to be caught up in systems and words and so do not understand that God is one and that all religious

traditions have their source in the same ultimate reality. This reality is beyond the reach of human thought, it cannot be grasped by words or doctrines, and is only truly understood by those who abandon external religious observances and devote themselves wholeheartedly to meditation and worship. In the poem below, Kabir stresses the need for true devotion to God, referred to here as Ram (an incarnation of Vishnu). Kabir indicates that asceticism is useless, since one only reaches liberation through ecstatic love of God, in which all sense of self is eliminated and one is consumed by pure love.

Go naked if you want, put on animal skins.

**What does it matter till you see the inward
Ram?**

**If the union yogis seek came from roaming
about in the buff, every deer in the forest
would be saved.**

**If shaving your head spelled spiritual
success, heaven would be filled with sheep.**

**And brother, if holding back your seed
earned you a place in paradise, eunuchs
would be the first to arrive.**

Kabir says: Listen brother, without the name of Ram who has ever won the spirit's prize?

[*Kabir Granthavali, pad 174*]

The poetry of Nanak stresses similar themes. He denounces idol worship and indicates that such practices as pilgrimages, ritual bathing, and ceremonies tend to keep the individual far from God. Nanak, like Kabir, views God as having two aspects: God is both immanent (*saguna*, literally, "having qualities") and transcendent (*nirguna*, "without qualities"). In essence God is completely transcendent, and any qualities imputed to God are merely human attempts to grasp the ultimate reality in terms that we are able to understand. God in essence is completely other, unknowable, and ineffable, but may still be experienced by those who empty themselves of ego and open themselves to the divine presence.

Nanak died in 1539 after founding and guiding a small group of followers he referred to as "Sikhs," or students. His students were both Hindus and Muslims, who saw Nanak as a great religious leader whose mystical experiences transcended their sectarian divisions. According to Sikh legends, he continually worked to help

them to overcome their limitations of religious vision.

Nanak's final teaching was given on his deathbed. When it became clear that death was near, a dispute arose between Hindu and Muslim Sikhs. The former group wanted to cremate him in accordance with their traditions, while the latter argued for burying his body. Nanak settled the dispute by telling them that each group should place a garland of flowers on one side of his body, and that the group whose garland remained unwilted after three days would be able to dispose of his corpse in accordance with its traditions. The next morning the shroud was removed, but his body was gone. All that remained were two garlands of unwilted flowers. Thus even in death Nanak taught his followers the importance of overcoming sectarian differences.

GURUS.

Before Nanak died, he designated his disciple Guru Angad (1539-1552) as his successor. According to Sikh tradition, this event marks the inauguration of the Sikh path (*panth*). Throughout Sikh literature the importance of the Guru is emphasized. In the early years of the tradition the Guru was human, and Sikhs believed that Nanak and his successors were mouthpieces through whom God revealed his message to humanity. Following the tenure of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, the Adi Granth was designated as the Guru, since it contained the inspired messages of the ten human Gurus and their Sant predecessors. The Gurus are believed to provide essential guidance, since their words are the signposts provided by God to call His devotees to mystical realization of truth.

If the True Guru is gracious, trust becomes complete.

If the True Guru is gracious, no one ever yearns.

If the True Guru is gracious, trouble is a thing unknown.

If the True Guru is gracious, God's pleasure is acclaimed.

If the True Guru is gracious, how could there be fear of death?

If the True Guru is gracious, lasting happiness is granted.

If the True Guru is gracious, one finds life's greatest treasures.

If the True Guru is gracious, one mingles with the Truth.

[*Var majh Pauri*, 25]

The office of Guru was in turn passed on to Amar Das (1552-1574), and then to Guru Ram Das (1574-1581). The fifth Guru, Arjan (1581-1606), worked to mold the Sikhs into a cohesive religious, social, and economic community. He initiated construction of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, which is today the holiest shrine of the Sikhs, and he directed the compilation of the *Adi Granth*, the holiest scripture of the tradition. This text contains writings by Nanak and the other early Gurus, as well as works by Kabir and other devotional poets. Guru Arjan placed the *Mul Mantra*, the basic Sikh statement of faith, at the beginning of the holiest book of the Sikhs, the *Adi Granth*. It expresses the primary

attributes of the Sikh conception of God, His absolute unity and absolute transcendence.

There is one God, Eternal Truth is His Name.

Maker of all things, fearing nothing and at enmity with nothing, timeless is His image.

Not begotten, being of His own Being: by the grace of the Guru, made known to humanity. [*Adi Granth* 1.1]

Today the *Adi Granth* is the center of the religious life of the community. Ornate copies of the text are placed on special pedestals in the center of each Sikh temple (*gurdvar*, literally, "door to the Guru"), and portions of it are chanted almost constantly while the temple is open.

Arjan's tenure marks a change of direction for the Sikh community. During the reigns of the first four Gurus the Panth had enjoyed generally amicable relations with the Muslim Mughal rulers who controlled northern India, but with the ascension of the emperor Jehangir the situation changed. Harkening back to the militancy of the early Muslim conquerors, Jehangir actively persecuted other religious groups, including the Sikhs. He had Arjan captured, and tortured him with the intention of

forcing the Guru to renounce his faith. Arjan refused to submit to the emperor's demands, and he eventually died in prison. Shortly before his death, he advised his son Hargobind (1661-1664) to "sit fully armed upon the throne," since Arjan recognized the threat the new Mughal ruler posed for his community.

The sixth Guru, Hari Rai (1644-1661) ruled during a time of increasing tensions between the Sikhs and the Mughal emperor. The eighth, Hari Krishan (1661-1664), died as a child, and was succeeded by Tegh Bahadur (1664-1675), who became another Sikh martyr as a result of his opposition to the emperor's imposition of a tax on all non-Muslims in his empire. Intending to make an example of the Guru, the emperor had imprisoned and tortured. He was ordered to renounce his faith and his opposition to the tax. When he refused, Tegh Bahadur was executed.

Guru Hargobind followed the wishes of his father, Guru Arjan, and began wearing two swords at all times, one symbolizing his religious authority, and the other his temporal authority. His tenure marks the beginning of the transition of the Panth from a group of devotional mystics concerned with reconciling the differences between Hindus and Muslims into a tradition stressing the importance of combat readiness

and willingness to fight—and die if necessary—in order to defend the faith.

His son Gobind Singh (1675-1708) became the tenth and last Guru. Realizing that the position made its holder a target, as the Guru lay dying from wounds inflicted by a Muslim assassin he declared that henceforth the *Adi Granth* would be the Guru. He told the community to view the text as the condensation of the inspired words of the Gurus, the mouthpieces of God, which should guide them in their religious lives.

Gobind Singh's other major contribution to the development of Sikhism was his institution of the Khalsa, the community of Sikh believers. Besieged by Muslim rulers who wanted to eliminate the Sikhs, the Guru realized that in order to survive his followers would have to develop into a military force. In a move that permanently changed the character of the Sikh community, he gathered the faithful together and asked if any were willing to die for their faith. Five men stepped forward, and the Guru led them one by one to a tent, and then emerged with his sword dripping blood. Many of the people in attendance believed that the Guru had gone mad, but Gobind Singh later showed them that the five men were actually unharmed. He had killed five goats, and the blood they had witnessed had been that of the animals. They

would consider themselves to be members of the Khalsa, and membership would henceforth be exclusive. The following day the Guru completed the process of transforming the community into a warrior group by declaring that henceforth the Sikhs would adopt external signs differentiating them from other communities. The signs were five distinctive marks symbolic of their new commitment, which are referred to as the "Five Ks" because their names in the Punjabi language all begin with the letter K. These are: (1) *kesh*, hair, which refers to the Sikh practice of not cutting the hair; (2) *kangha*, a comb used to keep the hair neat; (3) *kirpan*, a short sword, symbolizing the warrior ethos of the Khalsa; (4) *kara*, a steel wristband; and (5) *kachch*, short pants. Many male members of the community also began wearing turbans as a way of managing their hair, and most males also changed their family name to Singh, meaning lion, as a symbol of their devotion to the Guru. Women changed their names to Kaur, meaning princess, and all Sikhs were declared by the Guru to be members of the warrior caste (*kshatriya*), symbolizing both their emphasis on combat readiness and the equality of all believers.

Nanak had established the Panth as a community dedicated to reconciling Hindus and

Muslims, but Gobind Singh realized that peaceful relations with the Mughal emperor were no longer possible. In order to maintain its survival, the community would have to defend itself against attacks, and it would have to develop into a cohesive and well-trained military force in order to protect itself from its neighbors. The Mughal emperor was determined to eradicate the Sikhs, whom he considered to be a political and economic threat. Moreover, he viewed Sikhism as a particularly pernicious heresy, since its theology contained elements that were concordant with Islam, which he believed to be the sole truth. He feared that the Islamic elements of Sikhism might tempt people of weak intellect away from Islam, and in order to prevent this he resolved to eradicate the Sikh community. It is ironic that Sikhism began as a movement dedicated to reconciling different faiths but was pushed by historical circumstances to become a tradition that stressed the differences of its members from other religious groups and that was determined to defend itself from hostile opponents.

SIKH DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES

Sikh theology contends that God is one without a second, the transcendent ultimate that cannot be grasped by human intelligence or described by language. God is commonly referred to by such negative terms as Timeless (*akal*) and Unproduced (*ajuni*), but is also described positively as Truth or Being (*sat*). God is both utterly transcendent and accessible to His creatures through grace. God chooses some beings to draw near to Him through devotion, and he speaks to all beings through the words of the Gurus.

Sikhs commonly refer to God as *Akal Purakh*, "Timeless Being." He creates and sustains the universe, and is only known by those who approach Him with devotion. God reveals Himself through the Divine Name (*nam*), which expresses aspects of the divine Reality as understood by the limited intellects of His creatures. All of creation reflects the glory and activity of God, and so in this sense everything is an expression of the Name. People are able to approach God through meditation on the Name, through which they may transcend ordinary understanding and approach the Divine Presence. The Name is said in Sikh texts to be "the total expression of all that God is," and those who open themselves to the Name through

selfless devotion may come to know God in a way that transcends ordinary knowing.

One of the most important of Sikh meditative practices is "remembering the Name" (*nam simaran*), in which the devotee contemplates various epithets of God, along with the adumbrations of the divine essence that are found throughout creation. In this practice, the meditator generally repeats a particular word or *mantra*, or chants the songs of the Gurus, in order to bring about intuitive understanding of God.

Like Islam, Sikhism teaches that there is only one God, although He is known in various guises by different religions. In essence, however, God transcends all creeds and systems. Sikhism also agrees with Islam in rejecting the idea that God takes physical incarnations (*avatara*). God is utterly transcendent and cannot be contained within the limited form of a created being. Like Hinduism, however, Sikhism contends that living creatures are reborn in a beginningless cycle (*samsara*) and that each being's situation is a result of past actions (*karma*). The ultimate goal of Sikhism is liberation (*moksha*) from cyclic existence, but this can only be attained through God's grace, and not by personal effort.

The primary factor preventing the attainment of liberation is self-reliance (*haumai*), which causes beings falsely to imagine that they are independent and autonomous, that their fates are within their own control, and that salvation may be attained through actions. Self-reliance is born of ignorance, which is the root cause of continued transmigration. It is a perceptual error in which one mistakenly believes that one is independent and autonomous, although the fact of the matter is that everything in the universe is created and sustained by God. Those who hold to mistaken views of separateness and individuality fail to recognize the omnipresence of God and their utter dependence upon his grace. In order to combat self-reliance, one must cultivate proper attitude (*hukam*), which involves recognizing one's utter dependence upon God. Humble and devoted repetition of the Name helps one to develop humility and to recognize the transcendent glory of God.

God is within everyone, and so rituals are unnecessary, according to Sikhism, nor is there any point in making pilgrimages, since God is everywhere. One may worship God anywhere and at any time, and Sikhism urges its followers to strive toward realization of the Divine Presence all around them. Sikhism contends that ignorance (*avidya*) is the primary factor

preventing one from knowing God, and that ignorance is only eliminated by those who humbly submit themselves to the divine will and listen to God's message as revealed by the words of the Gurus and other inspired devotional mystics.

Since God is the ultimate source of everything, all is really God, although ignorant beings fail to realize this fact. God's presence is hidden from us by the power of illusion (*maya*), a process of projection that causes beings mistakenly to imagine that they have an existence apart from Him. In reality, however, everything is a part of Him, and nothing can exist apart from Him. When one wakes up to the reality behind this illusion (which can only occur through God's grace), one realizes the unity of God and gradually comes to perceive God in everything. Sikhism's formulation of the doctrine of *maya* differs from that of Advaita Vedanta in that in Sikh philosophy *maya* is not an objective reality projected by God, but a subjective error resulting from a wrong point of view, a belief in duality rather than unity. This causes a mirage of the world to be seen as an end in itself. It is eliminated by devotion and meditation on the divine Name. One who is wholeheartedly immersed in this practice may through the grace of God escape the cycle of birth and death and

attain final liberation, which Sikhism contends is an eternally blissful state of union with the Ultimate.

SIKH SCRIPTURES.

The first attempt to create a collection of authoritative Sikh texts was made during the tenure of the third Guru, Amar Das (1552-1574), who supervised a compilation of works by his predecessors. The fifth Guru, Arjan, began the collection of texts that became the *Adi Granth*, the most revered scripture of the tradition. Sikhs consider it to be the Guru, since it contains the collected wisdom of the early Gurus and their Sant predecessors.

There are three known recensions of the *Adi Granth*: (1) one believed to be the original text written by Bhai Gurdas and owned by a Sikh family in Kartarpur; (2) the "Damdama Recension," which was compiled during the seventeenth century and which includes works by Guru Tegh Bahadur; and (3) the "Banno Recension," which is widely regarded by Sikhs as non-canonical. The Damdama Recension is the standard text for all copies of the *Adi Granth* published in modern times. Modern published texts of the *Adi Granth* follow this version, even to the extent of adopting its pagination. Thus, all copies of the *Adi Granth* have 1,430 pages, and every individual page mirrors the contents of the original Damdama text.

The *Adi Granth* is divided into three main portions: (1) Introductory Material (pp. 1-13); (2) *Ragas* (pp. 14-1353); and (3) Miscellaneous Works (pp. 1353-1430). The introductory section begins with the *Mul Mantra*, the basic statement of Sikh faith. The next portions are the works of the *Japji* of Guru Nanak, which is regarded as containing his quintessential teachings. The introductory material ends with works by Guru Angad, Nanak's immediate successor. The second portion of the introductory section is referred to as the *Sodar*, so named because the first word of the first hymn is *sodar*. This section contains four poems by Guru Nanak, three by Guru Ram Das, and two by Guru Arjan. The third section of the introduction is named *Sohila* or *Kirtan Sohila*. It contains three works by Guru Nanak, one by Guru Ram Das, and one by Guru Arjan.

The term *Raga* refers to various metres used in the works of the second section of the *Adi Granth*. This is the largest portion of the text, and is divided into thirty-one sections, each of which contains hymns of a particular type. Within each *Raga*, works are arranged according to length and content. Hymns in four stanzas are placed at the beginning, followed by hymns in eight stanzas. The last part of the *Ragas* contains poems by predecessors of

Sikhism whose religious visions are considered to be consonant with that of Guru Nanak and his successors. Works by Kabir and the devotional poets Namdev and Ravidas are found in this section.

The section containing Miscellaneous Works has more writings by Kabir, and some compositions by the Sufi teacher Sheikh Farid. The final portion of the *Adi Granth* consists of fifty-seven verses by Guru Tegh Bahadur, two works by Guru Arjan, and the *Rag-mala*, which summarizes the contents of the *Ragas*.

The language of the *Adi Granth* is referred to as "*Sant Bhasa*," the language of the Saints. Linguistically similar to modern Punjabi, it was the language adopted by the devotional Sant poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in northern India. The words of the *Adi Granth* are recorded in the Gurmukhi script, which is also used for modern Punjabi.

Another important scriptural source for Sikhism is the *Dasam Granth*, the compilation of which is associated with the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. Like the *Adi Granth*, it is referred to as "Guru," and is widely regarded as an authoritative text, but it is far less important for the tradition than the *Adi Granth*. It contains a range of literature, including extensive portions

of stories from Hindu literature, many of which are written in different dialects.

The compositions of the mystic poets Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal are also highly regarded by Sikhs and have the status of scriptures. The former writer lived during the tenure of the third through sixth Gurus, and the latter was a follower of Guru Gobind Singh. Along with the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth*, their writings are the only works approved for recitation in Sikh temples.

Mention should also be made of the *janam-sakhis*, which are hagiographical stories of Guru Nanak's life, which stress the themes of the unity of God, the pointlessness of sectarianism, and the worthlessness of external religious observances. They were probably composed during the sixteenth century, and although they have not been granted the status of scriptures these stories are widely popular.

* * * *

CONFUCIANISM

Of all the traditions discussed in this book, Confucianism probably has the least in common with what most contemporary Westerners associate with "religion." Confucius (ca. 551-479 B.C.E.), the founder of Confucianism, did not assert the existence of a creator God, although he did mention an impersonal force called "Heaven" (*t'ien*) that watches over human affairs and confers a mandate on rulers that legitimates their power. Confucianism has no churches and no ecclesiastical hierarchy, and Confucius never clearly articulated any vision of the afterlife or a path to salvation. The focus of Confucius was squarely on human beings and their social relations with others. Confucius' philosophy articulated his vision of the Way (*tao*) of the "superior person" (*chün-tzu*), who embodies the qualities of a truly good human being. When asked about "religious" topics such as the nature of Heaven, the existence and propitiation of spirits, and so forth, Confucius generally cautioned his audiences to focus on the present life and on their personal conduct, and not to waste time on idle speculation.

THE NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY CHINESE RELIGION.

For modern Chinese, religion is primarily a matter of participation in community activities and rituals connected with important transitions, rather than adherence to doctrines and codes of conduct. Chinese rituals mark and celebrate the important rites of passage of human existence: birth, marriage, and death, as well as events in the agricultural calendar, such as planting and harvest. These rituals developed in a culture that is overwhelmingly agrarian and rural, in which the majority of people were (and still are) engaged in agricultural work. Underlying many Chinese religious practices is a deeply felt sense of the importance of promoting community solidarity and an emphasis on the rootedness of the individual and the collective in the natural world.

Another important feature of Chinese religious traditions is their eclecticism. The indigenous Chinese religious systems borrowed elements from each other and from traditions like Buddhism that were imported to China, and the foreign systems in turn adopted Chinese motifs and ideas in order to accommodate themselves to Chinese sensibilities. Among contemporary Chinese, sharp distinctions are seldom drawn between the major religious traditions of China:

Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism; rather, they are viewed as harmoniously intersecting with each other to form a comprehensive system that is able to adapt itself to a wide spectrum of religious needs. The three traditions are collectively referred to as "lineage of teachings" (*tsung chiao*) or "the three teachings" (*san chiao*), indicating that they are not perceived as separate systems of doctrine and practice but as mutually complementary emphases.

Confucianism is viewed as being primarily concerned with the interactions of people in a social context. It outlines the norms and values that ensure social harmony, along with the rituals and duties that enable people to act appropriately when in the company of others. Taoism focuses on the connections between human beings and their natural environment, how natural processes and forces affect human existence, and how to predict the movements of these forces and manipulate them for the benefit of individuals and society. The purview of Buddhism is mainly life after death, since Buddhism brought to China a highly developed eschatology and a pantheon of compassionate buddhas and bodhisattvas who are willing and able to give aid both in the present life and after death.

LIFE OF CONFUCIUS.

Confucius is the latinized form of K'ung fu-tzu, or "Master K'ung." According to Chinese tradition, he lived during the fifth century B.C.E. He was born in the small state of Lu, in modern day Shantung Province. Some accounts claim that he was a descendant of the royal house of the Shang Dynasty (1751-1122 B.C.E., the earliest authenticated dynasty of China), but his family had become impoverished by Confucius' time. His father is said to have been a soldier, and his mother was not the first wife. According to later tradition, when Confucius was born dragons appeared in his house and a unicorn was sighted in his village.

His father died when Confucius was young, and his mother died while he was still a child. According to Ssu-ma ch'ien, when Confucius was a boy he had little interest in the games of other children, and instead preferred to arrange sacrificial implements and pretend to be performing rituals. Apparently Confucius did not have a formal education, but through independent study managed to become renowned for his learning.

In his twenties he began to attract students. He married young and held a minor government position that required him to keep records of

stores of grains and animals used for official sacrifices. According to some accounts, his interest in rituals led him to visit Lao-tzu to seek advice on the performance of sacrifices, but Confucius was admonished for being excessively concerned with external observances and thus neglecting the Tao.

Confucius was married around the age of nineteen to a woman from P'in-kuan in the state of Sung. They had a son and a daughter. Fearing the onset of social disruption in Lu, he traveled to the state of Ch'i, hoping to gain a position of influence. He was well received but failed to achieve his primary objective, and so returned to Lu at the age of fifty-one. There he was appointed minister of justice, and according to Confucian accounts he instituted a period of good government. Records of his tenure claim that articles left on the road were returned to their owners, and people could travel freely without fear of crime. He became an advisor to the duke of Lu, but reportedly resigned in disgust after the duke received a present of eighty dancing girls from the rival duke of Ch'i, after which he no longer attended to his duties in the morning.

Confucius lived during a time of social and political turmoil, and this had a powerful effect on his thinking. The Chou dynasty (1111-249

B.C.E.), which had unified China and fostered the development of Chinese culture, was losing control, and China was in the process of breaking up into fiefdoms that were vying with each other for territory and power. Confucius lamented this social disintegration and hoped to guide his country back to the norms and practices of the early days of the Chou dynasty as reported in *The Book of Poetry* and the *Book of History*, both of which extolled the superior qualities of sage-emperors of the Shang and Chou dynasties. Confucius hoped to find a position of political power that would allow him to help the rulers of his time to rediscover the traditions of the past, which he believed would help China to correct its problems and reestablish good government.

Unable to find a suitable position in Lu, at the age of fifty-three Confucius began a trek through China in search of a ruler who would allow him to put his ideas into practice. During the course of thirteen years he journeyed to nine states. Some received him warmly and asked his advice, but in one state he was surrounded and threatened, and was made a target of assassination in another, and detained by government authorities in a third state.

He promised that any state that allowed him significant control of domestic matters and

foreign affairs would soon enjoy prosperity, enhanced prestige, and that it would have a contented populace that fully supported the policies of the rulers, but his ideas of government by wise and humane rulers were considered dangerous at a time when most rulers controlled their domains by force. After realizing that no one would give him an opportunity to implement his ideas, he returned to Lu at the age of sixty-eight and devoted himself to teaching, convinced that his life's mission had been a failure.

Rise Of Confucianism.

In spite of Confucius's sense of his own failure, his fame as a teacher grew, and traditional sources report that young men came from far and wide to study with Confucius and that he never turned away a student who was unable to pay him. As a result, young men of humble origins had access to education, which was an important factor in finding employment in government.

Confucius taught his students to cultivate themselves and urged them to aspire to become "superior persons." The superior person, according to Confucius, possesses an unwavering moral compass, and thus knows what is correct in all situations. He has the virtue of "human-heartedness" (*jen*), the coalescence of the moral qualities that characterize those who are truly good. A superior person is honest, courageous, stands in awe of Heaven and constantly seeks to perfect himself, is learned but does not boast of his learning, does not set his mind "for" or "against" anything, holds to no particular political philosophy, but rather seeks to follow what is right in every situation. He has no needs of his own, and so is able to work selflessly for others. His unassuming manifestation of good qualities inspires others to become better.

Society, according to Confucius, is perfected by such people, who set a moral standard that subtly motivates others to correct themselves in order to emulate them.

Although Confucius was unable to acquire the political power he desired during his lifetime, his students passed on his teachings, becoming teachers themselves. Some of them became influential educators and helped to install his notion of the superior person as a standard for conduct among the educated elite of China. In addition, Confucius introduced to China the idea that the primary criteria for holding public office should be intelligence, learning, and highly developed moral character, rather than hereditary status. He believed that universal standards of ethical behavior are outlined in the classics, and so he urged his students to study these texts in order to develop their moral awareness.

CONFUCIAN SCRIPTURES

According to Confucian tradition, Confucius edited the texts that came to be regarded as the Confucian classics: the *Book of Poetry* (*Shih ching*), the *Book of Changes* (*I ching*), the *Book of History* (*Shu ching*), the *Book of Rites* (*Li chi*), and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Ch'un-ch'iu*). These are regarded as the primary canonical texts of the tradition, along with the "Four Books": the *Analects* (*Lun-yü*), the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Chung-yung*), the *Great Learning* (*Ta hsüeh*), and the *Mencius* (*Meng-tzu*).

The *Book of Poetry* is the earliest anthology of Chinese poetry. It contains 305 poems dating from early times until the later part of the Chou dynasty. Confucian tradition holds that Confucius selected these from an earlier collection of three thousand poems, choosing those written in the finest style and exhibiting a high level of moral consciousness. The poems in the collection are mostly written in a style using rhymed quatrains with four characters per line, which became the standard for Chinese poetic writing after the time of Confucius.

The *Book of Changes* discusses how natural systems change, and it has long been regarded as a manual for divination. It contains sixty-four

hexagrams, along with explanations of the significance of each one and "ten wings" of commentary that indicate how they should be interpreted. According to Confucian tradition, the ten wings were composed by Confucius, but this attribution has been rejected by most contemporary scholars (although it is admitted that he may have had a hand in composing one of the wings).

The hexagrams are composed of two trigrams each, and the trigrams are composed of broken and unbroken lines. The lines signify interactions of *yin* and *yang*, the two opposing polarities whose movements govern the developments of natural systems. *Yin* is said to be passive, wet, yielding, and feminine, and is represented by broken lines, while *yang* is aggressive, dry, forceful, and masculine, and is represented by unbroken lines. The pattern of the lines of a hexagram is believed to provide indications of the directions of natural elements and forces.

The *Book of History* is a collection of historical records and speeches purportedly from the early dynasties of China. It is the earliest Chinese historical work, containing documents from seventeen centuries, dating back to the time of the legendary sage kings (third millennium B.C.E.). According to tradition, it

was compiled and edited by Confucius, who chose selections for their historical and moral import. Each selection reports an event in Chinese history and contains a colophon that indicates the moral judgments of the author.

The *Book of Rites* describes the implements used in state rituals, the rules of the royal court, ethical exhortations for women and children, discussions of education, proper performance of funerals and sacrifices to ancestors, and how a scholar should behave.

The *Spring and Autumn Annals* are historical records from the state of Lu from the period between 722 to 481 B.C.E. It describes the behavior of rulers, and is composed in a way that indicates the moral judgment of the compiler, believed by tradition to be Confucius.

Confucian tradition also holds that Confucius edited the *Book of Music* (*Yüeh ching*), which is now lost. It was replaced in the twelfth century by a ritual text entitled *Rites of Chou* (*Chou li*). During the Han period, these six texts came to be referred to as the "six disciplines" (*liu shu*), and later as the "six classics" (*liu ching*). Modern scholarship questions whether or not Confucius actually had a hand in editing these texts, since no evidence exists for this, except for relatively late traditions. It is clear from

accounts of his life that he was thoroughly familiar with these texts and that he taught them to his students, but contemporary scholars see little reason to accept the tradition that he edited them.

The *Analects* contains 492 chapters collected into twenty books, and it contains pithy instructions on the core concepts of Confucius' philosophy. The primary focus is the training and character of the superior person, who is morally upright, learned, and restrained in his appetites.

The *Doctrine of the Mean* was originally chapter forty-two of the *Book of Rites*. According to Confucian tradition it was authored by Tseng Ts'an (ca. 505-436 B.C.E.), but Chu Hsi contended that the opening paragraph was written by Confucius and that the rest of the work was an explanation composed by Tseng Ts'an. It outlines three goals for the superior person: "making luminous virtue shine" (*ming ming-te*), "having sympathy for the people" (*ch'in-min*) and "abiding in attainment of perfect goodness" (*chih yü chih-shan*). These are said to be the first steps toward ordering society and establishing good government.

The *Great Learning* was originally chapter thirty-one of the *Book of Rites*, but came to be

regarded as a separate text by the Confucian tradition. Tzu-ssu, a grandson of Confucius, is traditionally held to be its author, but this attribution is rejected by most contemporary scholars. It discusses the Tao of Heaven, which is said to be a principle that transcends the world but is manifest in its workings.

The *Mencius* contains teachings of the Confucian scholar Meng-tzu. These were written down by his students. The writings of Mencius represented an influential commentary on the thought of Confucius concerning the conduct of the sage and the nature of good government. The text consists of seven chapters, divided into two parts each.

Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, the founder of the Ch'in dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.), ordered Confucian texts burned, and as a result some works were lost, but most of the important texts survived, hidden by scholars until the political climate changed. The emperor also ordered the execution of a number of Confucian scholars, since he viewed the Confucian ideals of benevolent government as being at odds with his own authoritarian style.

When the Ch'in was overthrown by the Han dynasty, Confucianism again became the state ideology, largely due to the efforts of the

Confucian scholar Tung Chung -shu, who was an advisor to emperor Wu-ti (r. 140-87 B.C.E.). In 125 he created a university whose educational program was based on the study of the Five Classics (the *Book of Music* had been lost during the persecution of Confucianism) and the Four Books.

In the twelfth century, Chu Hsi published an edition of the Four Books that became the primary text for Confucian studies, eclipsing the Five Classics. In his system, students were advised to read the *Great Learning* first in order to learn the basic patterns of Confucianism, and then to move on to the *Analects*, which developed the ideas contained in the *Great Learning*. After that they should study the *Mencius* for its ability to inspire thought, and finally they should study the *Doctrine of the Mean*, which he described as profound and subtle. Due to his influence, these texts formed the basis for topics of the imperial examination system until it was abolished in 1905.

CONFUCIUS'S TEACHINGS FROM THE ANALECTS

The Analects (Lun-yü), record instructions given by Confucius to his students and events in his life. The title of the text literally means "conversations," and it received this name because it mainly contains conversations between Confucius and his students. They emphasize an interrelated set of themes, including the character and training of the "superior person," the idea that rulers should govern by moral persuasion and should treat their subjects as a loving father treats his children, the importance of following tradition, the role of rituals and sacrifices in establishing a harmonious state, and the importance of providing for the basic needs of the populace.

Confucius believed that the righteousness of leaders is the key to social stability and told rulers that it is important scrupulously to practice the social rituals that help a society to function harmoniously. The superior person, he taught, has a strong sense of propriety (li), a general term for the day to day norms of social interaction as well as for state ceremonies. The Book of History purports to record events from early Chinese history. It was an important source for Confucius in his understanding of the exalted qualities of the sage emperors Yao and

Shun, who are described as exemplars of righteousness, wisdom, and benevolent government.

Examining into antiquity, we find that the Emperor Yao was called Fang-hsün. He was reverent, intelligent, accomplished, sincere, and mild. He was sincerely respectful and capable of modesty. His light covered the four extremities of the empire and extended to Heaven above and the earth below. He was able to make bright his great virtue, and bring affection to the nine branches of the family. When the nine branches of the family had become harmonious, he distinguished and honored the hundred clans. When the hundred clans had become illustrious, he harmonized the myriad states. The numerous people were amply nourished and prosperous and became harmonious.[*Shu-ching* selections]

In addition, the superior person speaks the truth as he understands it, and so is concerned with the "rectification of names" (cheng-ming), which involves calling things what they are and using terms in a non-deceptive manner. Rulers

who equivocate and who use euphemisms that attempt to cloak the truth of things lose the confidence of the people as surely as those who are morally degenerate and who blunder in their decisions.

According to his student Tseng-tzu, there is "one thread" running through all of Confucius' teachings: an emphasis on the centrality of morality and cultivation of an ethical foundation, which leads the superior person to treat others like himself (shu). Human beings are said to have a basically moral nature (chung), which needs to be developed by education and contact with superior persons. Such people cultivate their own moral consciousness and seek to establish others in virtue.

Confucius taught that a person with the virtue of human-heartedness (jen) knows how to treat others and acts appropriately in all situations. A central virtue of such a person is filial piety (hsiao), which is evidenced by respect for elders and persons in authority, as well as by proper performance of rituals for the ancestors. Such behavior accords with the dictates of Heaven.

Confucius believed that Heaven watches over human affairs and confers a mandate to rule (t'ien-ming). This concept was first developed by the founders of the Chou dynasty to justify their

conquest of the Shang rulers. According to this theory, the emperor is the "son of Heaven" (t'ien-tzu), appointed to oversee human affairs, but rulers who become lazy, corrupt, or despotic cause Heaven to withdraw the mandate, and so lose their legitimacy. Heaven first sends warnings in the form of natural disasters, internal turmoil, or personal crises, and those who reform themselves may again earn Heaven's favor. Those who persist in their immoral actions, however, are eventually deposed by Heaven, which appoints other rulers of better moral character.

Although Confucius himself seldom mentioned such topics as spiritual beings, the nature of Heaven, life after death, or spirituality in general, his teachings became the basis for the most influential tradition of philosophy in China, one that eventually developed religious characteristics. Later Confucians propounded elaborate cosmological theories, doctrines concerning death and afterlife, and cultic practices. The tradition spread into other parts of Asia, and has been an important influence in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Although officially proscribed by the current leadership of the People's Republic of China, the ideas and values of Confucianism continue to exert a powerful influence on the Chinese people today.

MENCIUS

Mencius was the most influential early disciple of Confucius and his teachings are preserved in a book simply titled *The Mencius*. The name "Mencius" is a Latinized version of his actual Chinese name, Meng-tzu. According to Ssu-ma ch'ien's account of Mencius' life, he was born in the small state of Tsou and followed the example of Confucius in seeking public office in order to put his ideas into practice. Like his predecessor, however, he was unable to realize his ambitions, and made his greatest impact as a teacher.

Mencius (Meng-tzu) was born in Tsou and was taught by a student of Master Ssu. After mastering the Tao, we traveled abroad and served King Hsüan of Ch'i (r. 342-324 B.C.E.). King Hsüan was unable to use him, so he went to Liang. King Hui of Liang did not find his counsel helpful. He was considered impractical and removed from the reality of affairs.... Wherever he went, he did not fit in. He retired, and together with students such as Wan Chang he discussed the Songs and Documents and elucidated the ideas of Confucius, composing [his text entitled] *Mencius* in seven sections. [*Shih-chi* selections]

Mencius believed that the first rule of "humane government" (jen-cheng) is to provide for the basic needs of the people, and he agreed with Confucius that rulers should rectify their own behavior and cultivate a moral awareness. He taught his students that human nature (hsing) is basically good, but that people become corrupted through exposure to negative influences. No matter how depraved a particular person might become, however, the basic nature remains good, and through proper education one's fundamental goodness may be reawakened.

In one passage he compares human nature to the shoots of plants growing on a hill called Ox Mountain, on which cattle graze. Plants constantly send up shoots, but the cattle eat them, and so the plants are not able to grow. If the cattle leave, however, the plants will be able to grow, just as human nature will find its innate goodness if the conditions inhibiting its growth are removed. In order for this to happen, people must train their minds (hsin), which provide guidance in the process of moral development. The mind provides a faculty of discernment that, when attuned to human nature, develops into an unwavering sense of right and wrong.

Like Confucius, Mencius believed that Heaven confers a mandate on rulers and that it acts to remove corrupt rulers, but Mencius also contended that the people may become instruments of Heaven's will. When rulers become cruel and oppressive, they lose all legitimacy, and thus it becomes permissible for their subjects to remove them from office. Such doctrines were viewed by the rulers of his day as dangerous, and not surprisingly he was unable to find anyone to give him a position of real power. The selections below are drawn from his collected teachings, entitled the Mencius.

***HSÜN-TZU AND YANG HSIUNG:
THE NATURE OF HUMAN BEINGS.***

The question of whether human nature is basically good or evil was an important one for the Confucian tradition after Confucius. Mencius declared that human nature is basically good. Confucius himself did not make a definitive statement on the matter, and only said that people are born alike but become different through training and practice. He did contend, however, that all men have the potential to become superior persons. The most influential interpreter of Confucius prior to the Han dynasty was Hsün-tzu (Hsün Ch'ing, d. 215 B.C.E.), a younger contemporary of Mencius who lived in the state of Chao and who is best known today for his treatises on government and warfare. Unlike Mencius, Hsün-tzu believed that human nature is basically evil:

Human nature is evil; any good in humans is acquired by conscious exertion. Now, the nature of man is such that he is born with a love of profit. Following this nature will cause its aggressiveness and greedy tendencies to grow and courtesy and deference to disappear. Humans are born with feelings of envy and hatred....

He maintained further that rulers must employ strict controls in order to keep their subjects in line. He advocated strong centralized rule and the use of punishment to restrain the population, but he also believed that human beings can be taught to be good through discipline and education. He was reportedly a teacher of Han Fei, the exponent of the philosophy of Legalism that became the dominant ideology of the Ch'in dynasty.

Hsün-tzu rejected Mencius' ideas about human nature, contending that humans have innate desires, which can never be fully satisfied. People naturally desire to possess things, and envy others who have things that they do not, and these basic tendencies oppose the cultivation of virtue. Goodness is only attained through training that teaches people to restrain their urges and recognize higher goods. This training requires an education in the classics and education in proper performance of rites.

... when each person follows his inborn nature and indulges his natural inclinations, aggressiveness and greed are certain to develop.... Thus it is necessary that man's nature undergo the transforming influence of a teacher and the model that he be guided

by is ritual and moral principles. Only after this has been accomplished do courtesy and deference develop. Unite these qualities with precepts of good form and reason, and the result is an age of orderly government. If we consider the implications of these facts, it is plain that human nature is evil and that any good in humans is acquired by conscious exertion. [*Xunzi*, III.150-151]

He also rejected Mencius' idea of Heaven as a moral force that oversees human affairs. For Hsün-tzu, Heaven is simply nature, which is impersonal and has no ethical dimension, but operates in accordance with its own laws without regard to individual virtue or human desires.

Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.E.-18 C.E.) stakes out a middle position between Mencius and Hsün-tzu, contending that human nature is a mixture of good and evil. He contends that people become either good or evil as a result of their training: the good cultivate good, while the evil cultivate evil. His treatise helped to focus the attention of Confucian thinkers on this issue, but was criticized by later Confucians for its contention that human nature is partially evil.

Man's nature is a mixture of good and evil. He who cultivates the good in it will become a good man, and he who cultivates the evil in it will become an evil man. The ch'i [material force] is the driving force that leads one to good or evil.... Therefore the superior man studies hard and practices earnestly. He waits till his good becomes a rare treasure before he sells it. He cultivates his personal life before he makes friends. And he plans well before he acts. This is the way to fulfill the Way. [Fu-yen 3.1a-b]

NEO-CONFUCIANISM.

As noted, in the centuries following Confucius' death, many of his disciples became educators, and as a result Confucian philosophy became a part of the standard curriculum of educated Chinese. Despite its widespread influence, however, the vitality of the tradition languished from the fourth through tenth centuries. Most of the best minds of China were either Taoists or Buddhists, and although Confucianism was widely studied there were few notable interpreters of the tradition.

This situation changed dramatically in the eleventh century, when several prominent Confucian philosophers began to revive the tradition. Many of them were influenced by Buddhism and Taoism, and several had been Buddhists in their early years, but they ultimately rejected Buddhism because they considered its doctrine of "emptiness" (*shunyata*) to be nihilistic. They also saw the Buddhist emphasis on monasticism as unnatural, but found that the Confucian tradition valued the family and the norms of traditional Chinese society. A growing number of Confucian thinkers characterized Buddhism as a religion of "barbarians," unsuited to refined Chinese sensibilities, and they found in Confucianism a

tradition that accorded with the norms and values of cultured Chinese. For example, Han Yü (768-824) was a public official who led a Confucian attack on Buddhism and Taoism and called on the emperor to suppress them. He described Buddhism as a religion of barbarians that is at odds with cultured Chinese sensibilities, and he denounced Taoism as a religion that panders to primitive superstition. In one of his letters, he wrote to the emperor regarding the veneration of a relic of the Buddha. He advised the emperor to reconsider his decision to publicly view a fragment of bone believed to have been left over after the Buddha was cremated, on the grounds that this may seem to the common people to be lending imperial support to the Buddhist practice of relic veneration, which Han Yü considered barbaric.

Among the early figures of this Confucian revival—which is referred to in China as "Study of Nature and Propriety" (*hsing-li-hsüeh*) and by Western scholars as "Neo-Confucianism"—were such prominent philosophers as Chou Tun-i (1017-1073), Shao Yung (1011-1077), Chang Tsai (1020-1077), and the two brothers Ch'eng Hao (1032-1085) and Ch'eng-i (1033-1107). Chou Tun-i (1017-1073) was one of the important early figures in the Neo-Confucian revival that took place during the Sung dynasty

(960-1279). His most significant text was the Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate (T'ai-chi t'u huo), a short work that equates the "great ultimate" (t'ai-chi) with the "ultimate of non-being" (wu-chi), which he describes as a reality transcending space and time. Its movement generates yang, the active force in nature, and its rest gives rise to yin, the passive element of natural systems. Through the interaction of these two, the "five agents" or "five elements" (wu-hsing) are produced, and the combinations of these elements give rise to the phenomena of the world. Chou conceives of the universe as a dynamic and holistic system in which natural forces and human conduct are interrelated.

The later Neo-Confucian revival is divided by contemporary scholars into two streams, one rationalistic and one idealistic. The major figure of the rationalist tradition was Chu Hsi (1130-1200), while Wang Yang-ming (1427-1529) was the main exponent of the idealists. Confucians of the first group focused on the foundational principles (*li*) of the natural world, human behavior, and society, while the idealists were primarily concerned with how to develop a moral consciousness through training the mind (*hsin*).

Chu Hsi's philosophy is sometimes referred to as "study of principle" (li hsüeh), because he was concerned with developing understanding of the principles underlying human behavior and social interaction. He believed that society can be rectified through diligent study of the patterns of organization and development that underlie both human civilization and nature. In 1313 Chu Hsi's interpretations of Confucius were officially recognized as the orthodox system of Confucianism and became the basis for civil examinations administered by the government. As a result, they exerted tremendous influence in Chinese education until the abolishment of the system by the Nationalist government in 1905.

His philosophy was influenced by Chou Tun-i's Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate. Chu Hsi interpreted the "ultimate" (chi) as the furthest point that can be reached, and he defined the "great ultimate" (t'ai-chi) as the sum total of the principles of all the phenomena of the universe and the highest principle of each individual thing. According to Chu Hsi, the entire universe is one principle, and he interpreted the notion of "investigation of phenomena" as described in the Great Learning as a procedure of examining things in

order to become aware of how each phenomenon manifests principle.

He also contended that principle and material force are separate factualities in phenomena, although they are inseparable. Principle is immaterial, unitary, eternal, changeless, and indestructible. He viewed it as constituting the essence of things and as being always good. Material force is the energy that sustains physical things and provides the impetus for their production and transformation. It is corporeal, manifold, changeable, differentiated, and impermanent. It can become either good or evil in accordance with the choices made by human beings.

Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529) was an important opponent of Chu Hsi who lived during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). He was a government official and scholar, as well as an eminent military strategist whose real name was Wang Shou-jen. He became known as Wang Yang-ming because he maintained a retreat in Yang-ming Valley in Chekiang Province. His Inquiry on the Great Learning was his most important work and was widely debated by other Chinese thinkers. In this text he rejects Chu Hsi's explanation of the Great Learning, which places the investigation of things (ko-wu) before making thoughts sincere. Wang placed primary

emphasis on the study of mind (hsin-hsüeh), which focuses on developing moral awareness through education and ethical instruction.

Understanding, Wang contended, comes from within and not through external actions. He believed that knowledge of the good is innate and that principle (li) is a universal factor that is found in human beings as well as natural phenomena. He followed Mencius' idea that human beings are naturally good and that those who fully cultivate their nature are able to overcome selfish tendencies and embrace the truth of the Great Learning.

Wang also rejected Chu Hsi's notion that the investigation of things is an examination of external phenomena. Wang contended that goodness is an innate quality of the mind and believed that it involves "eliminating what is incorrect in the mind in order to preserve the correctness of its original nature." For Wang, the investigation of things entails an ethical imperative to put moral standards into practice and cultivate one's character.

*** * * ***

TAOISM

THE LIFE OF LAO TZU.

The origins of Taoism lie in popular religious practices and ideas of ancient China. According to popular Taoist belief, the earliest codification of the central concepts of the tradition was set forth by Lao-tzu, who according to legend was a sage who lived in the sixth century B.C.E. and who worked as an archivist in the state of Lu. A number of contemporary scholars believe that Lao-tzu (whose name means "Old Master") may not have been a historical figure. In addition, there is significant textual evidence that the work attributed to him is actually comprised of materials from different authors and compiled centuries after he lived. His historicity is doubted because there is little solid evidence that he ever lived and considerable confusion among the sources that mention him. According to the record composed by the historian *Ssu-ma Ch'ien* (154-80 B.C.E.), Lao-tzu was reportedly born in a small village in southern China in the later period of the Chou dynasty. His surname was Li, and his personal name was Er. He worked as an archivist for most of his life but, after becoming concerned with what he perceived as a degeneration of his

society, Lao-tzu decided to leave through the Western Gate, which marked the boundary of China. According to *Ssu-ma Ch'ien*, he was not heard from again. In later times, however, numerous sightings of Lao-tzu were reported, and a wealth of legends concerning this mysterious figure circulated throughout China.

Lao-tzu cultivated the Tao and the Virtue. His teaching focused on remaining apart [from society] and avoiding fame. After living under the Chou for a long time, he saw that the Chou was in decline, and he decided to leave. When he reached the pass [on the western frontier of China], Yin Hsi, the Guardian of the Pass, said, 'Since you are about to completely withdraw, I ask you to write a text for me. Lao-tzu thus composed a book in two sections which described the meaning of the Tao and the Virtue in more than five thousand characters. He then left. No one knows what became of him. [*Shih-chi*, p. 63.2142]

According to traditional sources, Lao-tzu was an older contemporary of Confucius, and the two supposedly met on several occasions. When

Taoist texts report their meetings, Lao-tzu is portrayed as utterly surpassing Confucius in his understanding of Tao and as admonishing him to give up his attachment to rituals, propriety, and learning and embrace simplicity. Not surprisingly, Confucian sources portray Confucius as the victor. In Ssu-ma ch'ien's history, Confucius comes to Lao-tzu for instruction on the proper performance of rituals, but is advised instead to give up his rigidity and affectations and embrace Tao.

There are other equally imaginative accounts of Lao-tzu. When Buddhism first arrived in China, many Taoists welcomed it as a kindred system, but over time rivalries between the two traditions developed, although they continued to borrow from each other. In one particular text,, a Taoist author claims that the Buddha was really Lao-tzu, who traveled to India after passing through the Western Gate. He intended to teach them the essence of Taoism, but soon realized that they were only capable of understanding the "Lesser Way," an inferior version of his teaching suitable for barbarians. The author reflects traditional Chinese attitudes toward non-Chinese peoples, who are seen as savages.

THE TAO TE CHING.

Regarded by Taoist tradition as their oldest sacred text, the Tao Te Ching is attributed to Lao-tzu and, as indicated in the earlier quote, was purportedly composed at the request of the gatekeeper Yin-his as Lao-tzu was leaving China. Initially reluctant to commit his ideas to writing because words inevitably distort the truth, Lao-tzu eventually agreed and summarized the essentials of what later came to be Taoist philosophy. Containing about five thousand characters, it is also popularly known as "The Five Thousand Character Classic." Modern versions of the text are divided into two sections, the first of which describes the Tao, while the second is concerned with how rulers should follow the way of Tao in order to rule wisely and well. Some contemporary scholars believe that the text we have today is not in fact a unitary work, but instead contains materials from various periods. It is widely believed to have been compiled during the Warring States Period, around 250 B.C.E., and the earliest known version of the text dates back to the beginning of the Han dynasty (202-220). It has also been the subject of numerous commentaries, many of which may still be found today in the Taoist canon.

It should be noted that the text makes no claim to originality. Rather, Lao-tzu stresses that his thoughts accord with those of the sages of the past and merely recapitulate the wisdom found by all who understand the subtle and profound workings of the universe. His text has two primary concerns: the Way (*tao*) and Virtue or Power (*te*), which is connected with its manifest operations. The Tao is described as a universal force, subtle and omnipresent, that gives rise to all things and provides their sustenance. It is the vital energy that makes all life possible, and it pervades the entire universe, providing a pattern for the growth and development of living things.

Transcending and embracing all dichotomies, the Tao is comprised of two opposite but complementary polarities, *yin* and *yang*. Originally these terms seem to have referred to the shady and sunny side of mountains, respectively. *Yin* is described as yielding, wet, passive, dark, and feminine, while *yang* is said to be aggressive, dry, active, light, and masculine. These distinctions are said to reflect distinctive tendencies within natural systems, but they are not diametrically opposed. Rather, each contains elements of the other, and their interaction provides the creative and dynamic

force behind the changes that occur in the natural world.

The Tao is ineffable. It transcends all sense experience and all thought. It may, however, be understood by the sage who becomes open to it and thus "becomes one with the Great Thoroughfare." The primary obstacle to this attainment is the senses, in combination with the intellect, which trick people into thinking that ordinary perceptions and cognitions provide a true picture of reality. Those who seek to become sages are counseled to empty themselves, to cast off learning, reasoning, words, and intellection. In this way they become open to direct experience of Tao, through which they can find true harmony with their environment and enjoy a long and tranquil life.

The workings of Tao tend toward harmony and balance, and whenever any part of a natural system develops extreme qualities, this imbalance triggers a corresponding backlash. This is true of natural phenomena and human beings. Imbalances in nature are corrected by automatic reactions, and the more extreme the imbalance, the more powerful will be the reaction. Similar principles operate in individual human lives and the actions of collectives. Any person or group that develops extreme qualities or that disturbs the natural

harmony of the world will reap corresponding consequences, which will inevitably right the balance of nature. Thus the Taoist sage goes along with the operations of the Tao, not forcing things, and so is able to live long and peacefully. Those who do not understand this principle are doomed to waste their vital energies in fruitless aggression and activity, like a strong swimmer who pushes against a current but eventually becomes exhausted and is carried downstream.

Lao-tzu compares human beings at birth to uncarved blocks of wood (*p'u*), with rough edges and unsymmetrical, like natural phenomena that have not been tampered with. Confucians shared this idea, but while they proposed to carve the block in order to properly socialize it, Lao-tzu sees this notion as profoundly misguided. Humans at birth are supple and yielding, full of life energy, but through the process of acculturation they are placed into artificial molds and unnatural situations, which dissipate their energies in useless activities. Those who allow themselves to become caught up in the rat race inevitably wear themselves down and become like withered, dead branches—hard, stiff, and unyielding—and so shorten their lifespans.

According to Lao-tzu, the operations of Tao may be compared to the movement of water.

When water encounters a hard obstacle like a rock, it simply flows around it, rather than battering against it. Water, which is soft and yielding, does not contend against obstacles placed in its way, but instead moves around them, finding the path of least resistance. As it does this, however, it also slowly and inexorably wears down the resistance of even the hardest rock, and over the course of time overcomes all obstacles and may even create deep chasms in solid rock. Similarly, the sage avoids direct confrontation and goes along with the natural flow of Tao, practicing the Taoist virtue of "non-action" (*wu wei*). A person who perfects this technique appears to do nothing, but in reality moves with the natural rhythms of the world, thus working in accordance with the Tao to promote harmony and prosperity.

Wang Pi's Commentary.

Wang-pi (226-249), author of the most influential commentary on the *Tao Te Ching*, is renowned in China as one of the foremost representatives of the Dark Learning (hsüan hsüeh) school of Chinese philosophy. This school is based on the "Three Dark Texts": the I ching, the Tao Te Ching, and the Chuang-tzu. The philosophers of the Dark Learning school proposed to return to the ancient classics, whose ideas they mingled with Confucian notions about the ideal society and Taoist metaphysics. One of Wang-pi's original contributions to Chinese thought was the notion of "original non-being" (pen-wu), according to which prior to the creation of the universe there was only undifferentiated non-being.

All being originates from nonbeing. Therefore, the time before there were physical shapes and names is the beginning of the myriad beings. When shapes and names are there, [the Tao] raises them, educates them, adjusts them, and causes their end. It serves as their mother. The text [the *Tao Te Ching*] means that the Tao produces and completes beings on the basis of the formless and the nameless. They are produced and completed but do not know how or why. [*Lao-tzu* 1.1.1a]

From original non-being arose the One, another way of conceiving the Tao. From the One arose the Two, and from this came the myriad things of the universe.

CHUANG-TZU.

After Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu is the second main figure of "philosophical Taoism." He is believed to have lived during the fourth century B.C.E, although little is known about his life except for the enigmatic descriptions found in his own works. Ssu-ma ch'ien reports that he lived in the southern country of Meng, in modern-day Henan, and that he died around 290 B.C.E. He is said to have held a minor government post but refused any offers of higher office, preferring to retain his autonomy and personal freedom. According to his own account, he sought to live apart from his society, refusing honors and political involvement, and cultivated the virtue of "uselessness," which enabled him to move unmolested in the world and to attain a state of harmony with the Tao.

Chuang-tzu lived in Meng. His given name was Chou. Chou once worked as a functionary at Ch'i-yüan in Meng. He was a contemporary of King Hui of Liang (r. 370-335 B.C.E.) and King Hsüan of Ch'i (r. 342-324 B.C.E.) There was nothing his teachings did not consider, and their essence hearkened back to the words of Lao-tzu. His texts, comprising more than 100,000 characters, all used allegories.... He mocked people like Confucius and elucidated the

meanings of Lao-tzu.... and he was adept at creating texts with hidden allusions and analogies. He used them to attack the Confucians and followers of Mo-tzu. Even the greatest scholars of his day could not defend themselves against him. His words flowed and swirled freely, at his whim, and powerful people could not use him, including kings, dukes, and others. [*Shih-chi* 63.2144]

Chuang-tzu shares similar views with Lao-tzu on the workings of Tao and the way of the sage. Where Lao-tzu's text uses terse aphorisms to make its points, however, Chuang-tzu tells stories that describe the way of the sage. Many of these have bizarre characters and strange situations, and they are pervaded by a subtle humor that gently mocks the ordinary ways of the world and the concerns of human society.

Chuang-tzu also differs from Lao-tzu in that he has little interest in applying Taoist principles in the political arena. The second half of Lao-tzu's text is concerned with how rulers should act and the principles of good governance, while Chuang-tzu repeatedly emphasizes his utter disinterest in becoming involved in such matters. Rather, Chuang-tzu counsels his readers to

cultivate uselessness, since things that are truly useless cannot be used by others and thus are left alone. Chuang-tzu indicates that Tao is everywhere and in everything, and that those who truly know it understand that it pervades even the lowest and most despised parts of the world. Most people waste their energies striving and planning for the future, and so fail to live in the moment. Sages, however, learn to move with the flow of Tao, and so they lead long and peaceful lives. The sage, according to Chuang-tzu, moves unobtrusively among the hustle and bustle of the world, living at the margins of society, and is generally not even recognized as a sage by his or her contemporaries.

A central theme of Chuang-tzu's philosophy is the limitations of language. Those who become caught up in expressions and concepts inevitably fail to recognize truth, which cannot be captured in words. Chuang-tzu teaches that most problems come from entanglement with words and concepts. As an antidote, he advises that we "unlearn" the lessons that others have taught us "for our own good." Ideas of morality, justice, truth, etc. merely confuse people and make them think of doing the opposite. To counteract this, an important meditative practice is "sitting and forgetting" (tso-wang), in which one simply lets thoughts flow freely, in

harmony with Tao, and thus artificial concepts disperse of their own accord. A person who perfects this is able to attain the state of "free and easy wandering" in which one acts spontaneously, in accordance with the impulses of the moment. A person who is in harmony with Tao is able to move freely in the world, unharmed by things that injure ordinary people. In one passage, Chuang-tzu falls asleep and dreams that he is a butterfly, but when he awakes he is unsure whether he is Chuang-tzu or a butterfly dreaming of being Chuang-tzu. The passage exemplifies the way that Chuang-tzu merges dreams and waking "reality" while indicating that the boundaries between the two are not as rigid as ordinary people assume.

Throughout his life, Chuang-tzu avoided all attempts to make himself useful to his society. When offered important positions, he turned them down, preferring instead to live in the moment, unharried by the concerns of busy and important people. According to Chuang-tzu, the sage completely transcends the limitations felt by ordinary beings, and cares nothing for their judgements. The sage moves in the world without becoming attached to anything. Living in the moment, he or she simply takes things as they come, and so is at peace. Ordinary people,

by contrast, are full of desires, cares, and worries, and so fail to realize their potential.

Chuang-tzu's friend, the logician Hui-tzu, is a favorite target of the subtle humor for which Chuang-tzu is famous. Portrayed as a philosopher who is fond of hair-splitting distinctions, Hui-tzu is chided by his friend for becoming overly attached to logic and words and thus failing to embrace the myriad mysteries of the natural world. In one passage, Hui-tzu attempts to turn the tables on Chuang-tzu, suggesting that despite his friend's emphasis on naturalness what he advocates is really contrary to nature. Human beings naturally have feelings of attachment toward certain things and aversion toward others, and it is absurd to suggest that anyone can truly view all things as equal. In his writings, Chuang-tzu frequently extols the value of becoming useless. Those who make themselves useful are used by others, and so they dissipate their vital energies and die young. The sage, however, appears to be stupid and blockish, and so others believe that he is useless, and so they leave him alone. Since death is an inevitable part of life, the sage embraces it along with other aspects of the natural world. For most people, death is fearful and oppressive, but for the sage death is part of

**the cosmic mystery constantly unfolding around
us.**

RELIGIOUS TAOISM.

The establishment of Taoism as a distinctive religious tradition dates back to 142 C.E., when Chang Tao-ling received the first of a series of revelations from T'ai-shang Lao-chün, Lord Lao the Most High. This deity is the personification of the Tao and is believed by Taoist tradition to be Lao-tzu, who in reality was a human form taken by the Tao in order to teach the truth to human beings. Chang Tao-ling began to spread the teachings he had received and established the first organized Taoist system, named True Unity of Celestial Masters. Because of his connection with the first revelation, he was recognized as the first of the Celestial Masters, the patriarchs of the school.

The tradition continues today. The sixty-fourth Celestial Master currently resides in Taiwan and is considered to be the direct descendant of Chang Tao-ling. The Celestial Masters tradition traces its philosophical roots back to the works of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu, and it has also developed into a communal religion that emphasizes rituals for purification and exorcism, along with teachings on morality.

Contemporary scholars commonly distinguish two main streams of Taoist thought: the system of the philosophers of the fourth and third

centuries B.C.E. is termed "philosophical Taoism," and the later tradition that was concerned with techniques leading to immortality is termed "religious Taoism." While this division does capture an important distinction of emphases within the tradition, it is also overly simplistic. Taoism has a long and complex history that has produced numerous strands of thought and practice, and recent research has shown that elements of the "religious" strand may be found in the works of the early "philosophical" Taoists, and texts of "religious" Taoism are strongly influenced by the thought of "philosophical" Taoists.

According to legend, Ho-shang Kung, the Master on the River, lived during the reign of the Han emperor Wen (179-156 B.C.E.), but the earliest dated stories of his life come from the third century C.E. He is said to have lived near the Yellow River, where he studied the Tao Te Ching in solitude. Eventually he came to the attention of the emperor, who asked him to teach the essentials of Lao-tzu's text. He indicates how the ideas of the Tao Te Ching became mingled with immortality practices such as breathing exercises and gymnastics. In the system of Ho-shang Kung, people receive vital energy (ch'i) from Heaven, but they ordinarily dissipate it unless they practice special

techniques to keep it stored in the vital organs. As the Taoist tradition developed, Lao-tzu's successors developed techniques for incorporating his doctrines into religious practice.

Religious traditions also drew from Chuang-tzu who in one passage offers a description of the sage which indicates that understanding of Tao makes a person godlike, able to fly and to transcend death. Also, in Chuang-tzu's stories there are several mentions of the "immortals" (*hsien*), who are said to live on a remote mountain (or, according to other accounts, on a hidden island). They avoid eating cereals, guard their vital energies, and are able to fly through the air. While most people dissipate their vital energies through involvement in mundane affairs, worry, and eating unhealthy foods, the immortals practice physical regimens that safeguard the life force (*ch'i*), while also avoiding activities and environments that weaken it. The search for immortality was an important concern of the developed Taoist tradition, which created elaborate systems of practice designed to promote long life. Among these were physical exercises that emulated the movements of long-lived animals (who were considered to be naturally adept at guarding vital energies), special diets that were believed to

promote the cultivation of energy, and chemical elixirs designed to replenish lost energy. Many of these elixirs contained cinnabar (mercuric sulfide), a red colored liquid metal that was widely believed to contain a high concentration of vital energy.

Taoist masters also developed systems of meditative practices designed to promote longevity, such as "meditation on the One" (*shou-i*), in which one guards the vital energies, concentrating on the universal life force emanated by the Tao. This practice culminates in an ecstatic vision of multicolored light. Other techniques described five primary energy centers in the body, each of which was inhabited by a particular god. Meditators were advised to increase the energy levels in these centers by safeguarding the energy drawn into the body through breathing, by avoiding grains, by ingesting specific medicinal plants, and by medical techniques such as acupuncture and control of the pulse.

Perhaps the most controversial of the long-life practices developed over the centuries are various sexual techniques (*fang-chung*) that were believed to increase one's store of energy. Sexual practices for men often include ways to increase yang energy, while females are taught how to increase yin energy. Many of these

describe a sort of sexual vampirism in which the energy of the partner is transferred to the practitioner. In other texts, it appears that the sexual practices awaken and augment one's natural energy. The following passage is written for men, who are advised to take as many sexual partners as possible, and that they should ideally be in their early teens, since young women have a greater store of energy. They are also counseled to avoid partners who are familiar with these techniques, since female adepts may turn the tables on them and take their energy. The procedure for women is similar to that for men: they are advised to have as many partners as possible, and that they should ideally be young, since the young have a greater store of energy. Women should avoid becoming aroused, since orgasm dissipates the energies cultivated by sexual activity. Those who succeed in restraining themselves will acquire the energy dissipated by their partners through seminal emission.

In the texts of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu there are suggestions that sages transcend the world and that its cares no longer burden them. This theme was developed in other Taoist texts that extol the prowess of the "Great Man" (ta jen), who is portrayed as a mighty figure traveling in the remote corners of the world—and the highest

reaches of heaven—without obstruction, complete master of all things. He wanders to the farthest reaches of the cosmos, visiting strange and mysterious realms and acquiring esoteric knowledge, along with substances that promote immortality.

Although the position of women was well below that of men in classical China, there are many stories of female sages in the Taoist canon. These women managed to transcend the boundaries imposed on them by their society. Applying esoteric lore in secret, they became recognized as teachers, and sometimes even as immortals. The following selection, from a collection of stories of immortals from the Han dynasty, reports on the life of the "Lady of Great Mystery," who is said to have successfully practiced the secret arts of immortality and to have ascended to heaven in broad daylight, a sign of exceptional accomplishment. Sun Bu-er, known in Taoist literature as "Clear and Calm Free Human," lived during the twelfth century. Perhaps the best-known of Taoist women immortals, externally she lived an unremarkable life, raising three children and performing the duties expected of a Chinese wife. At the age of fifty-one she undertook the training of Taoist immortality practices, and it is reported that she quickly mastered difficult

esoteric techniques. She composed a number of texts on immortality, most of which focus on distinctive techniques for women. A central concern is harnessing the vital energy and causing it to move up along the spine through subtle energy channels, and thus to the top of the head. It then cascades down the front of the body, bringing indescribable bliss and restoring vitality. The verses are written in a code using the terminology of the Taoist immortalists, and so an explanatory commentary by Chen Yang-ming, a twentieth-century Taoist master, is included.

TAOIST SCRIPTURES.

Given the long and varied history of Taoism and the range of concerns of Taoist authors, it is not surprising that the Taoist canon (*tao-tsang*) contains a great variety of texts. All traditions of Taoism trace their origins back to the works of Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, and other early masters such as Lieh-tzu. Later developments incorporate their ideas and symbols, although they often diverge from their systems in significant ways. Moreover, despite the importance of these early masters for the later tradition, the development of the religion of Taoism took place many centuries after their deaths. The dawn of an organized religion of Taoism was the second century C.E., and it can be traced back to the movements of the Great Peace (T'ai-p'ing) and the Celestial Masters, which formed around charismatic leaders and spread throughout China, both among common people and the cultural and political elite.

During the fourth and fifth centuries, Taoism became a widely popular tradition which appealed to all classes of Chinese society, and it is during this time that it began to develop a distinctive collection of scriptures. The earliest listing of Taoist texts was attempted by Pan-ku (32-92), in his *History of the Han*(*Han shu*), but it was not until the latter part of the fifth

century that the first comprehensive catalogue of Taoist scriptures was prepared by Lu Hsiu-ching (406-477). Sponsored by Sung Ming-ti (r. 465-477), he compiled the *Index to the Scriptures of the Three Caverns* (*San-tung ching-shu mu-lu*), which he presented to the emperor in 471. Now lost, this massive compilation was said to have listed over 1,200 fascicles (*chuan*), including philosophical texts, alchemical works, and descriptions of talismans.

The next important listing of Taoist literature was prepared by order of Emperor T'ang Hsüan-tsung (r. 713-756), who believed himself to be a direct descendant of Lao-tzu (who by this time was widely regarded as a celestial deity). The emperor ordered a search throughout his empire for all existing Taoist literature, which was eventually brought together in a collection called *Sublime Compendium of the Three Caverns* (*San-tung Ch'iung-kang*), which is said to have comprised 3,700 texts. He had a number of copies made of the collection, which were then stored in Taoist temples. Shortly after this, however, the imperial libraries of the capitals of Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang were destroyed during the An Lu-shan and Shih Ssu-ming rebellions, with the result that much of this huge collection was also lost.

Another compilation was ordered during the Sung dynasty (960-1279). Sung Chen-tsung (r. 998-1022) ordered his advisor Wang Ch'in-jo (962-1025) to compile a catalog of existing Taoist literature, and later Chang Chün-fang (ca. 1008-1029) headed a team of Taoist priests who compiled a collection of Taoist scriptures called *Precious Canon of the Celestial Palace of the Great Sung* (*Sung t'ien-kung pao-tsang*), which had 4,565 titles. This is regarded by the tradition as the first definitive edition of the Taoist canon.

During subsequent dynasties other compilations of the Taoist canon were prepared. The latest version of the canon was printed in 1926, with the sponsorship of the Nationalist government. Consisting of 1120 fascicles, it is the largest collection of Taoist literature ever completed. Fu Tseng-hsiang (1872-1950), a former minister of education, convinced President Hsü Shih-ch'ang (1855-1939) to allocate government funds to preserve this literature. Based on the collection of the White Cloud Abbey (Pai-yün Kuan) of Beijing, it is believed to be descended from an edition of the canon prepared in 1445, and later emended in 1845.

Since the compilation of the canon by Lu Hsiu-ching in 471, editions of the *Tao-tsang* have traditionally followed his division of Taoist texts

into the "Three Caverns": (1) Cavern of Perfection (*tung-chen*), which derives from the Supreme Clarity (*shang-ch'ing*) texts; (2) Cavern of Mystery (*tung-hsüan*), which derives from the Numinous Treasure (*ling-pao*) literature; and (3) Cavern of Spirit (*tung-shen*), which is based on the texts collectively called "Three Kings" (*san-huang*). This division appears to be patterned on the division of Buddhist teachings into the Three Vehicles.

In addition to this central division, the Taoist canon also contains other texts, such as the "Four Supplements" (*ssu-fu*), which follow the Three Caverns, named respectively *Great Mystery* (*t'ai-hsüan*), *Great Peace* (*t'ai-p'ing*), *Great Purity* (*t'ai-ch'ing*), and *True Unity* (*cheng-i*). The first three of these have traditionally been regarded as supplements to the Three Caverns, although in fact their origins are believed by contemporary scholars to have been composed in reference to other texts. The *Great Mystery* supplement is based on the *Tao Te Ching*, The *Great Peace*, *Great Purity*, and *True Unity* collections appear to be based on the *Scripture on the Great Peace* (*T'ai-p'ing ching*), the *Great Purity* (*T'ai-ch'ing*) texts on alchemy, and the True Unity or Celestial Masters tradition.

As Taoist literature developed, other texts found their way into the canon that did not fit neatly into the early divisions, and as a result the canon was further subdivided. In the modern canon, each of the Three Caverns is divided into twelve sections: (1) original revelations; (2) celestial talismans; (3) commentaries; (4) sacred diagrams; (5) histories and genealogies; (6) codes of conduct; (7) rules for ceremonies; (8) outlines of rituals; (9) techniques for alchemy, geomancy, and numerology; (10) hagiographical works; (11) hymns and prayers; and (12) memorial addresses. Despite the apparently detailed nature of this division, individual sections contain a range of literature, and individual texts within a given division may not correspond to the general category.

In addition to the *Tao-tsang*, another important compilation of Taoist scriptures should be mentioned, the *Edition of Essentials from the Taoist Canon* (*Tao-tsang chi-yao*), a smaller collection of texts compiled during the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912). The 1906 edition of this corpus contains 287 titles, including works attributed to Sun bu-er, some of whose writings are excerpted below. These two collections of scriptures contain hundreds of rituals for renewal (*chaio*), funeral liturgies (*chai*), philosophical texts, cosmological treatises,

rituals for festivals and healing, discussions of external and internal alchemy, medical literature, meditation texts, descriptions for identification and preparation of healing herbs and roots, mythological stories and hagiographies of great Taoist masters and immortals, and a variety of other types of literature.

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SHINTO

In ancient Japan there was no term for indigenous religious practices, but when Buddhism was introduced to the country in the sixth century the term Shinto, or "way of the *kami*," was coined in order to differentiate Japanese traditions from the foreign faith (which was labeled *butsudo*, or "way of the Buddha"). The *kami* are the indigenous gods of Japan, and Shinto is a general term referring to religious practices relating to them. Shinto has no founder, no organization based on believers' adherence to particular doctrines, and no beliefs or practices that are required of all. In contemporary Japan, Shinto is most visibly practiced at the many shrines found throughout the country, in popular festivals and pilgrimages, and in the continuing manifestations of reverence for the forces inhabiting the natural world that are celebrated in prayers and offerings to the *kami*.

The Japanese have traditionally believed that their country is the residence of many powerful beings and that these beings directly influence the lives of humans, as well as natural phenomena. *Kami* are commonly associated with natural forces, such as wind and storms,

with awe-inspiring places, such as mountains, waterfalls, and rivers, and with spirits of deceased humans. For example, Mount Fuji is widely viewed in Japan as a particularly sacred place and as the abode of powerful kami.

MYTHOLOGY.

According to the Shinto mythology, the first beings to arise in the world were three kami. They were followed by two more kami, and the five together became the progenitors of all the other kami. Most kami have a delineated sphere of influence, and their worship generally centers on a particular shrine or area. Other kami have a national significance and are venerated throughout Japan. Shinto mythology describes that when the earth was newly formed, the islands of Japan were still below the waters, and Izanami and Izanagi decided to create a special land. They thrust a spear into the waters, and the brine that dripped from it formed the islands of the Japanese archipelago. After this they united, and their union resulted in the birth of more kami. A Shinto myth describes how Izanagi, longing for his deceased love, decided to visit her in the land of the dead and plead with her to return with him. When he saw her body putrefying and covered with maggots, however, he ran away in horror and purified himself by bathing. The drops of water from his eyes and nose produced three kami: Amaterasu, Tsukiyomi (the moon god), and Susa no o.

The most prominent kami is the sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami (Great Heavenly Illuminating Goddess), who in ancient myths is

said to be the progenitor of the Japanese race. Shinto mythology describes a confrontation between Amaterasu and her brother Susa-no-o, who is said to have a wicked and deceitful disposition. When he decided to ascend into Heaven, she stopped him and demanded to know what his intentions were. He assured her that he meant no harm, but she did not believe him. In order to ensure that he would remain true to his word, he proposed that both should swear and produce children, which apparently made Susa-no-o keep his promise. A well-known Shinto myth in which Amaterasu decides to hide herself in a cave as a result of the misdeeds of Susa no o. When she enters the cave the world is plunged into darkness, and so the other kami work together to draw her out again. When she leaves the cave, a sacred rope is placed across the entrance to ensure that she will never again conceal her radiance from the world.

Amaterasu is also closely associated with the ruling house of Japan, which claims descent from her. This claim is a part of the official legitimization for the rule of the emperor, who was traditionally believed to be semi-divine. This was expressed in the title of "Living Kami" (*Akitsukami*), which was given to the emperor and implied that he was a direct descendant of Amaterasu. An idea that is common in East Asia

in general, is that natural calamities reflect on the personality and moral character of the ruler and serve as a sign of the displeasure of Heaven. A Shinto story describes that when the ancient emperor Sujin experienced difficulties he asked the kami to explain the cause, and he was informed that he had failed properly to venerate the kami Omononushi. The problems he was experiencing were a manifestation of the kami's displeasure, and the emperor was told that they would end when the emperor provided the appropriate offerings.

SHINTO PRACTICES.

Shinto is not a unified system of beliefs and practices, but rather is a general term that encompasses many different traditions dating from the earliest periods of Japanese history. Some of the elements and practices of Shinto may be derived from the religious lives of Japanese who lived thousands of years ago in prehistoric times, while others are influenced by the imported traditions of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, along with various indigenous practices and beliefs.

For the average contemporary Japanese, Shinto is not primarily concerned with doctrines. Rather, practicing Shinto involves performing actions expected of Japanese people who recognize the existence and power of the kami and who engage in actions traditionally associated with them. In the broadest sense, Shinto includes all the actions—festivals, rituals, prayers, offerings, pilgrimages, etc.—that pertain to the kami.

Because kami are believed to reside throughout the Japanese archipelago, there are shrines to local and national kami scattered throughout the islands, and these are an important focus of Shinto practice. There are between 78,000-79,000 Shinto shrines in Japan today, and

traditional households generally have an altar to the clan deity (*uchigami*), at which regular offerings are presented. This is a prayer spoken by the head priest of the Grand Shrine of Ise during a regular festival performed every six months. It asks Amaterasu to ensure that the emperor has a long life, to protect the country, and to promote the prosperity of the people.

By the solemn command of the Emperor,
[I pray] that you make his life a long life,
Prospering [his reign] as an abundant reign,
Eternal and unmoving as the sacred massed
rocks,
That you favor also the princes which are
born,
That you [protect] long and tranquilly the
various officials,
As well as even the common people of the
lands of the four quarters of the kingdom,
And that you cause to flourish in abundance
The five grains which they harvest.
With the prayer [I offer] the tribute threads
habitually presented by the people of the
Kamube

**Established in the three counties and in the
various lands and various places,**

**And the great wine and the great first fruits
prepared in ritual purity,**

**Placing these in abundance like a long
mountain range.**

**I, the great Nakatomi, abiding concealed
behind the solemn *tama-gusi*,**

**On the seventeenth day of the sixth month
of this year,**

**Do humbly speak your praises as the
morning sun rises in effulgent glory.**

[*Norito*, pp. 60-61]

**Every twenty years the grand shrine of Ise is
rebuilt. There are two sites on which the shrines
are constructed, and builders alternate between
the two. When the time comes to construct a
new shrine, a prayer is spoken to the goddess in
order to inform her that the time has come for
her to move again.**

DEVELOPMENT OF SHINTO.

Prince Shotoku (573-621) is a pivotal figure in Japanese history. He embraced Buddhism and propagated it throughout the country, but in the following edict, issued in 607 during the reign of Empress Suiko, r. 592-628, he continued the ancient practices of venerating the indigenous kami:

'We are told that our imperial ancestors, in governing the nation, bent humbly under heaven and walked softly on earth. They venerated the kami of heaven and earth, and established shrines on the mountains and by the rivers, whereby they were in constant touch with the power of nature. Hence the winter (*yin*, negative cosmic force) and summer (*yang*, positive cosmic force) elements were kept in harmony, and their creative powers blended together. And now during our reign, it would be unthinkable to neglect the veneration of the kami of heaven and earth. May all the ministers from the bottom of their hearts pay homage to the kami of heaven and earth.'[*Nihongi*, ch. 12]

In the modern period, Shinto can be classified into three broad categories, which although distinguishable are interrelated: Shrine Shinto

(Jinja Shinto), Sectarian Shinto (*Kyoha Shinto*), and Folk Shinto (*Minzoku Shinto*). The first type includes rituals and other activities performed at Shinto shrines. It centers on the prayers and offerings addressed to the kami, which are generally expected to lead to specific concrete results, such as material success, health, academic accomplishments, or protection. It is believed that prayers and offerings make the kami positively predisposed toward the people who present them and that the kami in return may grant their requests. The most important deity of Shrine Shinto is Amaterasu, whose main shrine is at Ise. The deities worshipped in Shinto shrines are collectively referred to as "the gods of heaven and earth" (*tenshin chigi*). Rituals and prayers are also offered for the well-being of deceased ancestors and to ensure the peace, stability, and prosperity of the country.

Contemporary Shinto thought commonly contends that ritual actions must be combined with a pure mind, since the kami will only positively respond to people whose thoughts are sincere. In order to gain the blessing and aid of the kami, one must have the "heart of truth" (*makoto no kokoro*) or "true heart" (*magokoro*), which is characterized by reverence for the natural world, concordance between one's thoughts and actions, and most importantly an

attitude of truthfulness that is the result of cultivating purity of heart.

Sectarian Shinto includes a number of Shinto groups that have developed into cohesive religious movements. Primarily comprised of thirteen sects officially recognized by the government during the Meiji era (1868-1911), Sectarian Shinto groups generally have a historical founder and tend to emphasize group solidarity. In addition, their religious centers are often churches rather than shrines.

Folk Shinto is a general term applied to the practices and beliefs of the mass of Japanese people who visit shrines and engage in activities relating to the kami but who do not feel a strong affiliation with any particular sect. Such practices emphasize reverence for natural forces, purification, and the idea that by performing certain actions one may gain access to the power of the kami in order to influence particular aspects of one's life.

Although many Japanese believe that Shinto is an enduring tradition of indigenous religious practices, contemporary Shinto practice is in fact an amalgamation of numerous influences, including Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese philosophy. The focus of Shinto practice is the natural world, and Shinto

emphasizes the connection of individuals with their environment. In modern times the development of Shinto has been strongly influenced by revivalist movements that seek to link it with Japan's past. One particularly important movement has been the school of Revival Shinto (*Fukko Shinto*), which was linked to the National Learning (*Kokugaku*) movement of the early Edo period (late seventeenth century). This movement was an attempt to purge Shinto of the influence of Buddhism and other foreign traditions and return to a "pure" and "original" form of Shinto. The most important exponent of Revival Shinto was Motoori Norinaga, whose study of Japanese classics such as the *Tale of Genji* convinced him that there is a discernible Japanese character, which is based on awareness of, and reverence for, the natural environment. Norinaga stressed the polytheistic character of Shinto and contended that mundane affairs are shaped by the will of the kami.

During the Meiji period the nationalistic tendencies of Revival Shinto were highlighted and Shinto became the official state cult. The government stressed the divine origin of Japan and pointed out that no foreign invasion of the nation had ever succeeded. This was attributed to the actions of the kami, who protected Japan

and worked to ensure its well-being. The government also emphasized the traditional connection between the emperor and Amaterasu Omikami, which was believed to confer on the emperor a divine right to rule.

Because these nationalistic notions were a part of the militaristic policies of Japan prior to and during World War II, State Shinto was outlawed during the Allied occupation, and the emperor publicly repudiated his divine status. With the removal of government patronage, Shinto again became the popular religion of the Japanese people, a position that it holds today. Throughout the Japanese archipelago, people worship at the numerous Shinto shrines, participate in Shinto festivals, purchase amulets empowered by kami and believed to bring success, protection, or good health, and pay reverence to their clan deities and the spirits of their ancestors. Shinto remains a diffuse tradition that incorporates elements of other systems but that is distinctively Japanese.

SHINTO SCRIPTURES.

Shinto is a practice-oriented tradition that focuses on rituals, prayers, and attitudes associated with worship and veneration of the kami, and it has no distinct canon and few traditional texts. The earliest literary use of the term Shinto is found in the *Nihonshoki* (*Chronicles of Japan*, written in 720), which purports to be a record of the early history of Japan and which is an important source of information on ancient Japanese religious ideas and practices. The *Nihonshoki* (also referred to as the *Nihongi*) and the *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Matters*) are among the oldest sources available for pre-Buddhist Japanese religious practices and myths, and these two works are the oldest known sacred literature of Shinto.

According to the accounts of these texts, before the arrival of humans on the Japanese islands, two kami named Izanami and Izanagi stood on the "floating bridge of heaven" and stirred the primordial waters with a jeweled spear. When the water began to coagulate they gathered up the sediment and let drops fall to form the islands of Japan.

Izanami died after giving birth to Kagutsuchi, the fire god, and Izanami followed her to the

netherworld hoping to ask her to return to the land of the living. She replied that she had already eaten the food of the dead and so could not return without special permission. She then instructed him not to follow her when she made the request, but after waiting for a long time he became impatient and went after her. When he found her, however, her flesh was putrefying and decomposed, which revolted him, and so he fled the netherworld, returned to the land of the living, and bathed in order to purify himself. When he washed his eyes, the dripping water gave rise to Amaterasu, the sun goddess, and her brother, Tsukiyomi the moon god.

Both the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* indicate that Amaterasu is the divine ancestor of the emperor, an idea that served an important role in the legitimation of the royal line. In addition, their descriptions of Japan as a special place created and guarded by the kami have been influential in shaping Japanese ideas about themselves and their country. The legends of these two works link the origin of the Japanese people with the kami and indicate that both humans and kami are intimately interrelated. Humans need the power of kami in order to achieve their goals, and the kami for their part require reverence and offerings from humans.

Other important Shinto texts include the *Fudoki* (*Records of Wind and Earth*), written in the eighth century, which is a collection of myths and legends; the *Man'yoshu* (*Collection of Ten Thousand Poems*), compiled in the late eighth century, which contains poems expressing the beliefs and practices of the common people; and the *Sendai Kujihongi* (*Narrative of Ancient Matters*), compiled in the ninth century, which contains accounts of the practices of the Mononobe clan.

* * * *

ZOROASTRIANISM

With little more than 100,000 followers, Zoroastrianism today is a shadow of its former self when a dominant religion of the Near East. Zoroastrianism developed in Iran and southern Russia around 1200 BCE, and at its height was the state religion of Persia's Empires from the third century CE until the expansion of Islam in the seventh century. Although the face of Zoroastrianism changed over its long history, several doctrines have remained consistent: (1) Ahura Mazda is worshipped as the one supreme God; (2) Zarathushtra is said to be Ahura Mazda's prophet who delivers his unique revelation; (3) the universe is a battle ground between opposing good and evil forces, and this cosmological dualism accounts for the presence of good and evil everywhere. Angra Mainyu, the primary evil spirit which embodies evil, is to be opposed; (4) Ahura Mazda created several divine beings, or Beneficent Immortals, who are to be venerated; (5) humans will be judged in the afterlife for their good or evil deeds.

BACKGROUND AND LIFE OF ZARATHUSHTRA

Between 2000 and 1500 BCE, there occurred a mass migration of Aryan people, perhaps from eastern Europe, to the region of what is now Iran. Over the next few centuries they successfully assimilated with the native people, as indicated by the name "Iran" which means home or land of the Aryans. The Aryan newcomers brought with them the an ancient polytheistic religion which involved the worship of daevas, or divine beings. After some centuries, a group of these Aryans migrated further to northern India, forming the basis of the early Hindu religion. Aryan culture had three principal social classes (priests, warriors, and cattle breeders), and different deities were associated with each. The gods of the priestly class included Mitra, Anahita, Varuna (the latter perhaps identified as Ahura Mazda). The priestly class also had religious rituals involving sacrificing oxen, imbibing the intoxicating juice of the haoma plant (*soma* in Sanskrit), and fire rituals, perhaps derived from Agni, the fire God of early India's religion.

Zarathushtra emerged as a religious reformer, reacting against both the polytheism and rituals of the Aryan religion. Little historical

information is available about the life of Zarathushtra, and scholars have variously placed him between 1,500 and 500 BCE. The most plausible tradition places him around 1200 BCE in the Azerbaijan province of Northwest Iran; some linguistic and archaeological evidence, however, suggest that he was from an oasis tribal setting in Eastern Iran, near what is now the Afghanistan border.

According to later Zoroastrian tradition, Zarathushtra began his mission at age 30, after having a series of visions in which he was escorted to Ahura Mazda's presence, where he received his divine message. The first ten years of his mission were especially unsuccessful, and his only convert was his cousin. His teaching antagonized a group of priests who conspired against him and threw him into prison. At age 42, still in prison, his fortune changed with the conversion of King Vishtaspa (Hystaspes in Greek), an as yet unidentified monarch. Vishtaspa had an ill horse, and Zarathushtra healed it, leg by leg. During the process, the king was required to make certain concessions. The king was impressed, and the whole court accepted Zarathushtra's teachings.

Although Zarathushtra's life events remain hazy, there is greater knowledge about the content of his teachings and his role as a religious reformer.

His foremost reform is advocating the supremacy of Ahura Mazda. The name *Ahura Mazda* means "Wise Lord," and Zarathushtra described him as holy, eternal, just, all knowing, and creator of all. Ahura Mazda is also said to be the source of all goodness, including success, glory, honor, physical health, and immortality. Zarathushtra condemned the *daevas* of the Indo-Iranian pantheon as subordinate devils, and their priests as devil followers. He also attacked many of the traditional Indo-Iranian religious rituals, especially the wasteful slaughter of great numbers of oxen, bulls and cows in ritual sacrifices. Aspects of the haoma ritual were condemned, but Zarathushtra continued this tradition with some modifications. The traditional fire rituals were also modified so as to reflect worship of Ahura Mazda, who is symbolized by undying fire.

Zarathushtra emphasized the religious conflict between good and evil. This ethical emphasis is best described as dualistic insofar as all key players -- human and divine -- choose either good or evil. Ahura Mazda demands ethical and ritual purity and judges the souls of people after death. The principal evil force, called the Lie (*druj*), wages war against Ahura Mazda. To assist in the war against evil, Ahura Mazda created Beneficent Immortals (*Amesha Spentas*).

Later Zoroastrian tradition sees them as guardians over areas of Creation. They are: Asha Vahishta (Best Order, or Best Truth), associated with fire; Vohu Manah (Good Thought), associated with the ox; Khshathra Vairya (Desirable Dominion), associated with metals; Spenta Armaiti (Beneficent Devotion), associated with the earth; Haurvatat (Wholeness), associated with water; and Ameretat (Immortality), associated with plants. The theological status of the Beneficent Immortals is not entirely clear, and it is not certain whether they are distinct entities or merely different aspects of Ahura Mazda. Some scholars believe that their names and functions are derived from traditional Indo-Iranian deities, particularly the deities of the lower classes.

According to Zarathushtra, the cosmic ethical drama began when two twin spirits chose between good and evil. The spirit Spenta Mainyu (Beneficent Spirit) allied himself with good, and Angra Mainyu (Destructive Spirit) chose evil. As Zoroastrianism developed over the centuries, Angra Mainyu became the embodiment of all evil, and even the co-rival of Ahura Mazda. Although his role is more limited in Zarathushtra's teachings, Zoroastrian tradition consistently describes Angra Mainyu

as working for evil in the service of the Lie and is the source of misfortune, disaster, war, sickness, and death. To aid him in the assault on good, Angra Mainyu created several devils (*daevas*) which correspond with the Beneficent Immortals. The demon opposing Vohu Mano is Ako Mano (Bad Mind), against Asha Vahishta is Spozgar (Disorder), against Khshathra Vairya is Bushyasp (Sloth), against Spenta Armaiti is Asto Vidhatu (Death, literally, Bone Dissolver), against Haurvatat is Az (Greed), and against Ameretat is Tishn (Thirst). Angra Mainyu also counter-created demons/fiends which correspond to the other spiritual beings (*Yazads*).

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF ZOROASTRIANISM.

Zarathushtra's new religion continued to spread after his death. During the Achaemenian Persian dynasty (550-330 BCE), the first documented period of Zoroastrian influence, the religion was associated with the Magi. Although the identity and role of the Magi is unclear, they were experts in cultic ritual and claimed to be descendants of Zarathushtra's first converts. They may have originally been an early hereditary class of priests who allied themselves with Zarathushtra's teachings. When Mesopotamia was conquered by Alexander the Great, the impact of Greek culture caused a decline of Zoroastrianism. It was revived during the Parthian period (247 BCE-237 CE), although there is little reliable information to indicate its character at this time.

Zoroastrianism peaked in influence during the Sasanian period (227-651 CE) when it became the state religion of Persia. Zoroastrian expansion throughout the empire was mostly the result of conversion, though at times adherents to rival forms of worship were punished. Sasanid theologians developed Zoroastrianism's great cosmological myths, dividing cosmic history into four 3,000-year periods. During the final period, Zarathushtra and his three

descendent prophets appeared at 1,000 year intervals to wage war on Angra Mainyu. The world currently awaits the last prophet, Saoshyant, who will bring about final judgment and usher in a new world. The dead will then be resurrected, Ahura Mazda will judge all people according to their conduct as recorded in the book of deeds, and Angra Mainyu will be destroyed. Hell will also be dismantled, and the wicked (with few exceptions), having been purified, will be released.

Zoroastrianism gradually declined after 633 when the Muslims entered Persia and most of the population was forced to convert to Islam. Zoroastrianism was still tolerated for about 300 more years, but persecution in the 10th century prompted many to leave Iran for India. Known as the Parsis, the immigrating Zoroastrians settled near Bombay and today total around 70,000. They are generally financially well off, and many help to support the remaining Zoroastrians in Iran, who today number around 30,000. An additional 20,000 Zoroastrians live in other parts of the world.

TEACHINGS FROM THE AVESTA.

The foundational and oldest Zoroastrian scripture is the *Avesta*, a compilation of liturgical texts composed over a 1,000 year period. The original *Avesta* probably comprised twenty-two books and included historical, medical, and legal information along with liturgical texts. Only a small part of the original *Avesta* has survived. Zoroastrian legend recounts that two official copies were destroyed by Alexander during his campaign in the Persian capital. Priests gathered the remaining orally transmitted fragments, which were regularly recited in liturgies. The *Avesta* was kept alive through recitation until about 400 CE, when an official edition was ordered by the Sasanid rulers. It is written in an archaic language called Avestan, which is related to Sanskrit and uses a modified Pahlavi alphabet. The *Avesta* is the only surviving example of a text in this language.

In its current form, the *Avesta* is about 1,000 pages and written in different dialects from different periods of time. The most important division is the *Yasna*, a collection of prayers and liturgical formulas in seventy-two chapters. A fifty-page section in the middle of the *Yasna*, called the *Gathas* (chapters 28-34, 43-54), contains hymns in an older dialect, and is

believed to have been written by Zarathushtra himself. The other key divisions of the *Avesta* are:

Visparat (all the leaders): liturgical extension of the Yasna (22 chapters);

Vendidad (law against demons): instructions for ritual purification and moral practice to ward off evil powers, also containing myths and medical texts (22 chapters);

Khorde Avesta (Smaller Avesta): book of daily prayer used by the laity. Among other texts, it includes:

- *Yashts* (songs of praise): long hymns to various divine beings, some paralleling those found in the Hindu Vedas, plus epic narratives about kings and heroes;
- *Niyayeshs*: litanies to the Sun, Mithra, the Moon, the Waters, and to Fire;
- *Gahs*: dedications for each period of the day;
- *Afrinagans*: blessings;

The *Avesta* also includes several shorter fragments of lost books. Most of the surviving texts of the Avesta were used ceremonially. One of the oldest and most central Zoroastrian statements of faith is a creed from Yasna

Chapter 12, which was perhaps initially required of converts. In both thought and deed, the believer vows to reject all evil as associated with daevas and the Lie [druj], and instead adhere to the good of Ahura Mazda, and the Beneficent Immortals [Amesha Spentas]. The opening of the creed is as follows:

I curse the Daevas. I declare myself a Mazda-worshipper, a supporter of Zarathushtra, hostile to the Daevas, fond of Ahura's teaching, a praiser of the Amesha Spentas, a worshipper of the Amesha Spentas. I ascribe all good to Ahura Mazda, 'and all the best,' the Asha-owning one, splendid, xwarena-owning, whose is the cow, whose is Asha, whose is the light, 'may whose blissful areas be filled with light'.

The dualistic battle between good and evil forces is the most characteristic feature of Zoroastrianism during all phases of its history. The following is from a section of the Yasna known as the Gathas -- texts believed to have been written by Zarathushtra.

Now the two primal Spirits, who revealed themselves in vision as Twins, are the Better and the Bad in thought and word and action. Between these two the wise once chose

aright, the foolish not so. When these two Spirits came together in the beginning, they established Life and Not-Life, and that at the last the Worst Existence [i.e. hell] shall be to the followers of the Lie [druj], but the Best Thought [i.e. heaven] to him that follows Truth [asha]. Of these two Spirits he that followed the Lie chose doing the worst things. The most beneficent Spirit chose Truth [asha], he that clothes him with heavy diamonds as a garment. [Yasna Ch. 30]

In this Gatha, Zarathushtra describes the foundational moral conflict between Ahura Mazda and the Lie (druj). The conflict is carried on further by Ahura Mazda's twin sons, identified in other passages as the good Spenta Mainyu (Beneficent Spirit) and the evil Angra Mainyu (Destructive Spirit). This passage presents significant interpretive problems. On one interpretation, Spenta Mainyu is regarded as separate from Ahura Mazda; thus, both of these battling spirits -- including Angra Mainyu -- were created by Ahura Mazda. A second interpretation, by William Malandra, is that the twin sons are merely ethical concepts, not spiritual beings. Thus, Zarathushtra is retelling a traditional myth which was familiar to his audience, and then reinterpreting it in the light of his own revelations. "Spenta Mainyu" then, is

as a synonym for Ahura Mazda. On either interpretation, the cosmic dualism established between Spenta Mainyu vs. Angra Mainyu is paralleled by an ethical dualism between Druj (the lie, evil), and Asha (truth, righteousness). Yet another interpretation of the above passage became the basis of the Zurvan sect of Zoroastrianism which flourished between the fifth and tenth centuries CE. Zurvan, a minor deity mentioned in the Avesta, is the supreme God of the sect. As seen above, Yasna 30 states that " Now the two primal Spirits, who revealed themselves in vision as Twins, are the Better and the Bad in thought and word and action." The Zurvan sect interprets this literally and sees Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu twin sons of Zurvan. The good and evil twins create the world and wage war on each other, and the evil twin is ultimately defeated.

The moral battle between good and evil not only touches the spiritual realm of thoughts and deeds, but the material realm as well. Things associated with contamination and death, for example, are deemed evil. Although no longer widely practiced today, Zoroastrian rituals concerning the removal of hair and nails vividly illustrate how physical things can be tainted by evil. The problem of physical things being contaminated by evil is most pronounced with

dead human bodies. When one dies, a Corpse Demon (druj nasu) comes into the body and contaminates it and items which touch the body. Burial is not possible, since this contaminates the sacred earth, and cremation contaminates the fire. The preferred method of corpse disposal is for dead bodies to be devoured by corpse-eating dogs and birds which frighten off the Corpse Demon. To facilitate this, Zoroastrians construct Towers of Silence (dakhmas), cylindrical walled structures that expose corpses to vultures. This practice has been frequently noted in literature and is one of the most distinctive aspects of Zoroastrian ritual.

TEACHINGS FROM LATER WRITINGS.

In addition to the *Avesta*, Zoroastrians have numerous scriptures from the Sasanian period which are written in a middle-Persian dialect called Pahlavi. Thus, the writings are typically called *Pahlavi texts*. Many are exegetical commentaries (called *Zand*) which translate, summarize, and explain the *Avesta*. The Pahlavi texts are more numerous than those of the *Avesta*. The primary ones are:

Bundahishn (Original Creation): 36 chapters on cosmogony, mythology, and cosmic history;

Denkard (Acts of the Religion): a collection of doctrines, customs, traditions, history, and literature, originally written in nine books, of which the first two are now lost;

Datastan-i Denik: religious opinions of the high priest Manushkihar in response to ninety-two questions;

Zadsparam:: a collection by the high priest Zadsparam, younger brother of Manushkihar, which discusses cosmology and the life of Zarathushtra.

In addition to the Pahlavi texts, several later Zoroastrian texts are written in a more modern Persian language. The most important of these is the *Sad Dar* (*One Hundred Doors*), the first Zoroastrian text known to the West, which was translated into Latin by Thomas Hyde in 1700.

Zarathushtra taught that heaven awaits good people, and hell evil people. Entrance into heaven requires crossing the Chinvat Bridge which spans the abyss of hell below (Yasna 46:10, 11; 51:13). The details of this journey of the soul were worked out in later Pahlavi texts, such as the following by ninth century Zoroastrian high priest Manushkihar from his *Datastan-i Denik*. On the fourth day after death, our souls leave our bodies and we cross the Chinvat Bridge. If we sided with good during our lives, then the bridge is as wide as seven spears and we easily pass to heaven, which is filled with beauty, light, pleasant scents, and happiness. If we sided with evil during our lives, however, the bridge turns sideways becomes as narrow as a razor's edge, and we plummet into hell which is filled with stench, filth, and pain.

Those who are wicked, as they place their feet onto the bridge, because of distress and its sharpness, fall from the middle of the bridge, and roll over headmost. The unpleasantness of this path to hell is like the

worldly one in the midst of the stinking and dying things. There numbers of the sharp-pointed darts are planted out inverted and point upwards, and they come unwillingly running. These do not allow him to stay behind or delay. This pleasantness and unpleasantness to the souls is much greater than their worldly likeness, since that which is fit for the spirit is greater than that fit for the world. [Datastani Denik, Ch. 20, 21, 26, 27]

In later Pahlavi Zoroastrian writings, Angra Mainyu has a more elevated role in cosmic history. In the Bundahishn, a Pahlavi text on cosmogony and cosmic history, we find a description of the initial confrontation between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu and their ensuing 12,000 year battle. During the first 3,000 Ahura Mazda created the Beneficent Immortals and the world. Angra Mainyu responded by creating helper demons. They then agreed to limit the struggle to an additional 9,000 years.

During the second 3,000 year period of cosmic history, Angra Mainyu stays in darkness only to wage a full scale assault on creation during the third 3,000 year period. The fourth and final

3,000 year period begins with the birth of Zarathushtra, who rallies humans to the cause of Ahura Mazda. The following describes the miraculous conception of Zarathushtra, attempts to kill him at an early age, his encounter with Vohu Manah and his call to prophethood at age 30. The selections are from the Pahlavi Denkard, a Pahlavi compendium of Zoroastrian doctrine, and the Zatspram, a collection of doctrines from ninth century CE. Zoroastrian high priest Zatspram. After Zarathushtra, three additional saviors are to come at 1,000 year intervals. They will be born from virgins who bathe in a lake guarded by 99,999 angels who preserve Zarathushtra's seed. The saviors are Hushedar, Aushedar-Mah, and Saoshyant. Saoshyant's coming marks the end of the 12,000 year cosmic struggle between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu. The following, from the Pahlavi Denkard, describes the birth of Saoshyant and his defeat of Angra Mainyu in the final battle. After the defeat of Angra Mainyu in the final battle, the dead will resurrect on the spot where they died, and Ahura Mazda will judge everyone. The evil of the world will be purged with molten metal, Angra Mainyu will be destroyed, and a new universe will come into being:

Afterwards, Ahura Mazda seizes on the evil spirits.... and the dragon Go-chihr will be burnt in the melted metal, and the stench and pollution which were in hell are burned in that metal, and hell becomes quite pure. Ahura Mazda sets the hiding place into which the evil spirit fled, in that metal. He brings the land of hell back for the enlargement of the world. The renovation arises in the universe by his will, and the world is immortal forever and everlasting. This earth becomes an iceless, slopeless plain. Even the mountain, whose summit is the support of the Chinvat bridge, they keep down, and it will not exist. [Bundahishn Ch. 30]

Parallels between Zoroastrian beliefs and those of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are striking, for example the messianic figure of Saoshyant, the Armageddon-like final battle, bodily resurrection, final judgment, and heaven and hell. Many historians of religion believe that Zoroastrianism is the source of these beliefs. However, the complex web of Zoroastrian doctrines themselves developed over time, and precisely when certain doctrines first appeared is still unclear. Until this is more firmly established, it is best to simply note the parallels.

RITUALS.

Zoroastrians have a variety of rituals, such as seven holy days of obligation, rites of passage, including the navjote initiation ceremony for young adolescents, and rituals of cleansing and purification. Six primary ritual obligations are discussed in the Sad Dar (Hundred Doors), a text on a hundred subjects which is written in Persian. They are, (1) celebration of the season festivals, (2) keeping the days of the guardian spirits on the last ten days of the religious year, (3) attending to the souls of deceased relatives, (4) reciting the Sun Litany three times every day (5) reciting the Moon Litany three times every month, and (6) celebrating the Rapithwin ceremony once every year. In addition to ritual obligations, Zoroastrians have strict codes of moral obligation which encourage virtues and condemn vices. Often these moral instructions are in the form of aphorisms (Andarz), such as the following from the Denkard:

There are five best things in religion, which are truthfulness, generosity, being possessed of virtue, diligence and advocacy. ... The best generosity is when we give something to a person with no hope of receiving anything in reward in this world, and we do not even

expect the receiver to show us gratitude and praise.

* * * *

JUDAISM

Judaism, with its 3,000 year existence, is one of the world's oldest living religions. Like all religions, Judaism has evolved over time, but several key beliefs pervade its rich history. First and foremost is the belief that YHWH (usually pronounced Yahweh) is the only God and creator of all. Second, humans should obey God's law as found in both written and oral law. Third, God made a series of covenants with the Jews to designate their lineage as chosen. The most significant of these covenants are with Abraham, who received the promise of a nation, with Moses, who received the Law, and with David, who received the kingdom. Fourth is the belief that a coming King-Messiah will free the Jews from foreign domination. Unlike the other major monotheistic religions in the Western tradition -- Christianity and Islam -- Judaism is distinguished by being *this-worldly*. Although a doctrine of the afterlife can be found in its teachings, greater emphasis is placed on the nation, the land, and traditions.

BEGINNINGS.

Judaism is inseparably tied to the history of the Jewish people; their scriptures, feasts, and worship practices recall events of the past. The earliest historical and archaeological record derived from the period of Israel's settlement in its land is from the 12th century BCE, during the period of the Judges. At this time the Israelites were occupied with capturing territory from the previous inhabitants of perhaps a thousand years, the Canaanites, and settling into agrarian life. The land, *Israel* to the Jews, and *Canaan* to the Canaanites, is an area about the size of New Jersey, located on the southeast shore of the Mediterranean sea. Some of the Israelite stories defined their identity as a nation and entitled them to the land.

Two initial creation stories describe how we all got here. Central to both is the idea that humans are the pinnacle of God's creative activity. The first creation story emphasizes the cosmic structure of creation (Genesis Ch. 1, 2:1-3):

When God began to create heaven and earth -- the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the

water -- God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

Also, the writer sees creation involving three mandates. First, humans are to fill the earth and master it. Second, humans are to eat plants for food. Finally, the seventh day of the week is declared holy. The other creation story is sometimes seen as more agrarian-oriented (Genesis Ch. 2:4 ff.):

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens-- and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground-- the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the

breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Both creation accounts describe how God created two original humans, Adam and Eve, the parents of all humanity. However, the story continues, they disobeyed God and introduced evil into the world. After several generations, evil and ungodliness propagated to the point that God finds all the earth's inhabitants wicked, except for Noah, and destroys the earth in a flood. This story sets the stage for the first great covenant in Judaism: that between God and Noah. When the waters subside, God promises that he will not again destroy the world by water and permits humans to eat animal flesh. However, all slaughter of animals must be done in the context of a sacrificial rite conducted by a priest.

After Noah, the story line then jumps forward to Abraham, a Mesopotamian nomad from a few hundred years prior to the Hebrew settlement in Canaan. God selects Abraham to be father of a nation and instructs Abraham and his clan to migrate to Canaan, which God then gives to him. This is the second great covenant of Judaism, and circumcision is the sign of that covenant. Two generations later famine drove his

descendants to Egypt and, within a few more generations, their population dramatically increased. For a while all was fine, until the Pharaoh of Egypt, Intimidated by their numbers, enslaved Abraham's descendants, using them as forced labor for his building projects. Soon he issued an edict that male infants were to be drowned. To save her child, one woman placed her toddler, Moses, in a basket and floated it down the Nile, where it was discovered and he was adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter. When Moses grew up, God appeared to him and instructed him to lead his people out of Egypt and into Canaan. To break the Pharaoh's resistance in releasing the Israelites, God killed the first born humans and cattle in Egypt. In preparation for the event, the Israelites are instructed to perform a series of activities which became the basis of the Passover, one of Judaism's most sacred feast, is in celebration of this event. Eventually, they were led by Moses out of Egypt and into the desert, where they wandered for 40 years.

During the journey, Moses received detailed codes of law directly from God. at Mount Sinai, a means by which the Israelites could become a holy people. This is the third great covenant in Judaism. The Mosaic Law, as it is called, contains a series of codes on social, ethical, and

religious topics, and is articulated throughout the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, interspersed with narratives about the Israelites' 40 years of wandering. The various codes include the Covenant Code (Exodus 21-23), the Purity Code (Leviticus 11-16), the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-27), and the Law Code (Deuteronomy 12-26). The best known part of the Mosaic law, though, is the 10 Commandments, which are actually presented twice. The following is the version from Exodus 20:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall

labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The literary and legal style of these codes is frequently compared to other codes of the ancient near east, such as the Code of Hammurabi, king of Ur. For example, on the issue of kidnapping, the Hammurabi code states, "If a man has stolen the young son of a freeman, he shall be put to death." By comparison, the

Covenant Code in Exodus 21:16 states, "He who kidnaps a man -- whether he has sold him or is still holding him -- shall be put to death." The following is from the Holiness Code, a P text in the Book of Leviticus.

The story continues that, after 40 years of wandering, the Israelites capture Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, Moses' successor. Politically, Canaan was a decentralized collection of tiny independent kingdoms. Religiously, they performed plant and animal sacrificial rites in temples and open air places, and fertility rites of prostitution. Key deities of the Canaanites were El the creator, Asherah the consort of El, Baal the son of El and god of storm, and Anat daughter of El and goddess of war. The Israelites and Canaanites already shared a common ethnic and language family, which was Semitic. As they occupied the land and eventually controlled the region, many intermarried with the locals and adopted the Canaanite ways, including worship of their deities. Politically the Israelites were a loose confederation of 12 tribes. A political balance of power was held in Israel between the chosen tribal leaders, legal and military judges, prophets, and priests from a thirteenth and landless group or tribe, Levi. Geographically there was a more delicate balance of power

between two southern tribes, Judah (the largest of the twelve) and Benjamin, and the remaining ten tribes located primarily in the north, who felt threatened by Judah's size and political dominance.

One of the few women leaders in Jewish history was a military Judge named Deborah; here story is described in the book of Judges. With the aid of the military leader Barak, Deborah and a small group defeat the army of Jabin, King of Canaan. The Canaanite army, headed by Sisera, had an initial advantage of 900 chariots. Due to a sudden divinely caused cloud burst and flash flood, the Israelites gain the advantage. The narrative continues with the Song of Deborah, which commemorates this victory. Composed about 1100 BCE, it is one of the oldest passages of the Tanakh and is similar in structure to Canaanite poems of the period. Historically it denotes the Israelites' successful habitation of the hillsides, overshadowing Canaanite occupation of the valley regions:

In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,

In the days of Jael, caravans ceased,

And wayfarers went

By Roundabout paths.

**Deliverance ceased,
Ceased in Israel,
Till you arose, O Deborah,
Arose, O mother, in Israel!
When they chose new gods,
Was there a fighter then in the gates?
No shield or spear was seen
Among forty thousand in Israel!**

UNITED AND DIVIDED KINGDOMS.

An unexpected influx of warring invaders from the northeast Mediterranean area forced the Israelites to unify politically. These invading Philistines had a special military advantage in iron weaponry. Bronze weapons were less effective, especially in the hands of an Israelite army of drafted civilians. The need for a monarchy arose to facilitate a more concerted effort to block the Philistine power. Saul was appointed the first king and narratives relate how his disobedience quickly put him in disfavor with God. Saul died in battle with the Philistines after the Kingdom and military leadership passed to his son-in-law, David, who instituted a standing professional army. Equipped with iron weapons, David's army effectively put an end to the Philistine threat. Through military and diplomatic maneuvers, the Kingdom of Israel took control of territory as far south as Egypt, and as far north as Mesopotamia. The contrast between Saul's and David's reigns reflects the most consistent theological theme in the historical narratives of the Israelites: obedience to God results in prosperity, disobedience results in hardship. The fourth and final great covenant in the Judaism is with King David, wherein a promise

is given that David's house and kingship will be secure and his throne established forever:

The Lord declares to you that He, the Lord, will establish a house for you. When your days are done and you lie with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own issue, and I will establish his kingship. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to Me. When he does wrong, I will chastise him with the rod of men and the affliction of mortals; but I will never withdraw My favor from him as I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed to make room for you. Your house and your kingship shall ever be secure before you; your throne shall be established forever. [2 Samuel 7:8-16]

At David's death, the throne passed to his young son, Solomon. Legendary for his wisdom, Solomon is said to have been the wisest of all men and author of three thousand proverbs. He is also renown for his multiple diplomatic marriages, and it is his reign that Israel's glory

peaked. Its borders extended further than they ever would again (though not as far as under David), and Israel was a key player in ancient near eastern politics. Solomon launched monumental building projects including several fortified cities and a palace. But the jewel in the crown of Solomon's achievements was the construction of Israel's first permanent temple, said to have taken 13 years to complete. All sacrifices were to be performed only at the temple in Jerusalem; thus the temple became the focus of all religious activity in Israel. Although Solomon taxed the entire country to fund his projects, benefits were seen primarily in Judah, which further alienated the northern tribes.

Solomon died about 922 BCE, and the throne passed to his son, Rehoboam. When Rehoboam announced that he would continue his father's policy of taxation, the northern tribes split from the south and proclaimed their own kingdom. The religious explanation given for this split is Solomon's continual worship of regional deities. The southern kingdom was thereafter referred to as *Judah*, while the northern kingdom retained the name *Israel*. During this period, both the northern and southern kingdoms continued to be influenced by Canaanite religious practices and efforts were made at

monotheistic reform in both kingdoms by prophets and kings. Writers of the Tanakh condemn these worship practices and praise the Yahwist prophets and kings who challenge them. Israelite worship of the goddess Asherah is of particular interest. In Canaanite mythology, Asherah was the wife of the Canaanite high god, El, and in some popular Israelite religious practices may have been a consort of Yahweh. Worship rituals of Asherah center on sacred pillars, which in the are strictly forbidden (Deuternonomy 16:21-22). The Tanakh presents a dramatic showdown between the prophets of Asherah and Baal on the one hand, and the prophet Elijah on the other hand. Elijah is the lone defender of Yahweh in the northern Kingdom at this time. To demonstrate that Yahweh is the only true God, Elijah proposes a contest in which both sides set up their own respective altars, and call on their respective Deity to ignite their altar. Elijah wins the contest, and has the rival prophets slaughtered (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1-2, 17-40). Elijah's monotheistic victory was short lived and the northern Kingdom (as well as the southern) gravitated toward Canaanite religion.

After a 200-year existence, the northern kingdom was conquered by the Mesopotamian superpower of the time, Assyria. For several

decades, the north had tried several strategies of resistance, but in 722 BCE its kingdom was annexed as an Assyrian province. Some Israelites were deported, while others fled to Judah. Colonists from Mesopotamia settled in the region and intermarried with the remaining inhabitants, forming the Samaritans, a remnant of which remains today. The southern Kingdom of Judah survived Assyrian encroachment and continued for another one hundred and fifty years. However, it was continually embroiled in foreign political conflicts. Under the leadership of King Ahaz, the southern Kingdom initially escaped Assyrian annexation by becoming an Assyrian vassal. Two decades later, though, Judah's King Hezekiah broke with the Assyrians, prompting a military confrontation which ended in loss of territory for Judah and a return to vassal status. The prophet Isaiah was an advisor to both Ahaz and Hezekiah. His advice to both kings was the same: do not participate in anti-Assyrian conspiracies, but trust in God for deliverance. He charged that the people of Judah had forsaken God and risk being purged. Although Hezekiah and later King Josiah made valiant efforts at monotheistic reform, each time the populous reverted to Canaanite practices.

EXILE AND RESTORATION.

In Mesopotamia, the power structure shifted and around 610 BCE a group of Semites in Babylon, the Chaldeans, overthrew the Assyrians and formed a new Babylonian Empire. The Babylonians invaded surrounding countries to bring them within its control. In 596 they marched into Judah, looted the temple and royal treasury, and exiled the royal family and upper class Israelites to Babylon. The Babylonians appointed Zedekiah as a puppet king and at first Zedekiah paid tribute to the Empire. However, he too rebelled mistakenly thinking that Egypt would come to his defense if necessary. In retaliation, the Babylonian army invaded on two more occasions (587, and 583 BCE). Judah was crushed. Cities and homes were destroyed, thousands of skilled craftsmen and potential trouble makers were deported to Babylon, and thousands more fled to Egypt, some of whom came to the Island of Elephantine. Most significantly, Solomon's temple was destroyed. Although events during the Babylonian captivity are sketchy, the trauma of the exile apparently forced the Israelites to re-examine and solidify their religious beliefs. In the absence of the temple, the *Torah*, or books of Moses, became more important. Their understanding of Yahweh may also have

changed to view him as sovereign authority over the universe. The term *Jew* became common at this time, which means someone from Judah. Captive in Babylon, the psalmist in the following passage reflects nostalgically on the beauty of Zion, referring to the city of Jerusalem, possibly the Temple Mount.

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion.

There on the Poplars we hung up our lyres, for our captors asked us there for songs,

our tormentors, for amusement, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither; let my tongue stick to my palate

if I cease to think of you, if I don not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour.

Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem's fall; how they cried, "Strip her, strip her to her very foundations!"

Fair Babylon, you predator, a blessing on him who repays you in kind what you have inflicted on us; a blessing on

him who seizes your babies and dashes them against the rocks! [Psalms 137]

Yet again the power structure in Mesopotamia shifted. In 539 BCE, the Persian emperor Cyrus overthrew the Babylonians, and reversed the policy of exiling foreign captives as practiced by the Babylonians and, earlier, by the Assyrians. With his encouragement, 40,000 exiled Jews returned to their homeland, Judah, now known by its Greek pronunciation *Judea*. Cyrus also encouraged the rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple and returned to the Jews the temple treasures which had been taken by the Babylonians. Judea, however, remained a province of the Persian Empire. The Jews who stayed in Babylon continued to prosper and populate, and their views may have been influenced by Zoroastrianism, the Persian religion at the time. Angeology and demonology become more prominent themes in post-exilic writings. Greater emphasis was placed on the resurrection of the dead, cataclysms of the end times, and the age of a redeemer or Messiah. The Book of Esther describes a dramatic episode in the lives of Jews who remained in Babylon at this time. Esther is queen to Persian King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), one of Cyrus's successors, reigning from 486-465 BCE.

Unknown to the King, Esther is a Jew. When her cousin Mordecai refuses to bow to the King for religious reasons, Haman, a member of the court, is incensed and plots to have Mordicai, along with the rest of the Jews in the region, executed. The King sanctions Haman's plan. When Mordicai pleads with Ester to speak to the King on behalf of the Jews, she plans a banquet for the King during which she reveals Haman's plot at it. Haman is hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordicai. The Jews are granted the right to defend themselves against their anti-Jewish enemies. The story of Esther is the basis for the Jewish feast Purim.

In 458 BCE an additional 17,000 people returned to the land under the leadership of Ezra. Ezra was a Babylonian-born Jewish priest devoted to the Law of Moses. He petitioned Artaxerxes, the reigning King of the Persian Empire, to lead another migration of Jews back to their homeland. Artaxerxes agreed and empowered him to make political and religious reforms as Ezra saw fit. Ezra returned from Babylon with a complete *Torah* in the form we have today, which is the five books of Moses. On arrival, he was distressed to see that the returning Jews before him had intermarried, and he proclaimed that 114 priests and laymen should have their marriages annulled. Thirteen

years after Ezra's return, Nehemiah, a Jewish cupbearer to the Persian King, was granted permission by the King to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, still in ruins from the Babylonian invasion. A gifted administrator, Nehemiah completed the project in 52, days even in the face of opposition from neighboring provinces. Shortly after completion of the walls, the Jews celebrated a series of feasts, during which Ezra publicly read and interpreted the scrolls of Moses. The concluding events of the Tanakh focus on Ezra's and Nehemiah's activities, as described in the books which bear their names. They two leaders instituted a theocratic state with power vested in the priests and their reforms set a new direction for the Jewish religion. The Jews were required to take an oath to observe the Torah, tithe, sacrifice, and attend feasts. Marriage with foreigners was condemned in order to assure cultural and religious survival. He also established a council called *The Great Synagogue* to formulate doctrine and perhaps compile the texts of the *Tanakh*.

Two of the most beloved books of the *Tanakh* were also crystalized at this time: the books of Psalms and Proverbs. The Book of Psalms is a collection of 150 songs and prayers written over a 600 year period, many after the Babylonian exile. The book may have taken its

final form under the editorship of Ezra, and is sometimes referred to as the hymn book of the second temple. Although the authorship of most of the psalms is uncertain, 73 are ascribed in the text to David and are traditionally said to reflect happy or troubled periods of his life. The Psalms are classified as they relate to themes of deliverance, penitence, praise, pilgrimages, historical episodes, and messianic hope. Also compiled during the time of Ezra, The Book of Proverbs contains seven distinct collections of sayings, the first four of which are traditionally attributed to Solomon. The book contains sayings from throughout periods of the united and divided Kingdom, and are mostly in the form of two-line sentences about an aspect of human experience, usually secular. Three literary styles are exhibited in the proverbs. Synonymous parallelism occurs when the second line repeats the content of the first, such as, "A ready response is a joy to a man, And how good is a word rightly timed! (15:23)" Antithetic parallelism is where good behavior in the first line is contrasted with bad behavior in the second line, such as, "A wise son makes his father happy; A fool of a man humiliates his mother" (15:10). Finally, ascending parallelism is when the second line completes the train of thought in the first line, such as, "The eyes of

**the Lord are everywhere, Observing the bad
and the good" (15:3).**

COMPILATION OF THE TANAKH AND OTHER SACRED TEXTS.

As noted, the most sacred collection of writings for Judaism is the *Tanakh*. The word "Tanakh" is an acronym coined in the middle ages from the initials of its three divisions: the Torah (Law), the Neviim (Prophets), and the Ketuvim (Writings). The 24 books of the *Tanakh* are traditionally categorized as follows:

**Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus,
Numbers, Deuteronomy**

Neviim:

**Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges,
Samuel, Kings**

**Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah,
Ezekiel, The Twelve (Hosea, Joel,
Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah,
Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah,
Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)**

**Ketuvim: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth,
Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations,
Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles**

The books of the *Tanakh* were written and compiled over a period of 1,000 years, from

approximately 1100-100 BCE. Each book has a detailed history of authorship, editing, and re-editing. The writings appear in a variety of literary genres, including song lyrics, historical chronicles, wisdom literature, laws, prophecies, and apocalypses. The oldest stories and poems, such as the *Song of Deborah*, may have been orally transmitted before taking written form. Much of the *Tanakh* bears the mark of post-exilic Judaism, either in composition or in editing. The books and main divisions of the *Tanakh* were in place when in 90 CE a Sanhedrin council in the Palestinian city of Jabneh gave the list its official stamp.

Of all writings within Judaism, the five books of the Torah have always been considered the most sacred. Thus, an understanding of its development is important. The term *Torah* means law, in the sense of instruction or teaching, which traces its authority to Moses. More specifically, *Torah* has come to mean the collection of writings consisting of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Any account of the origin and authorship of the *Torah* must take place against the backdrop of a theory in biblical scholarship known as the Documentary Hypothesis, most famously articulated by Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918). According to this,

the *Torah* is a fabric sewn from four distinct textual sources identified as J, E, P, and D. The J source acquired its name from its continued use of the word *Yahweh* (often mispronounced *Jehovah*) for God in early parts of the narrative (prior to the revelation of the divine name of God to Moses). The E source is so named for its pervasive use of the term *Elohim* for God. The D source refers to the bulk of the text of Deuteronomy with its unique style. Finally, The P source derives its name from the priestly content of its text.

Since Wellhausen, biblical scholars have identified more precisely the authors and dates of the four sources. One interpretation is that the J source was written by an author of the southern kingdom and reflects the political interests of Judah. Sometimes this involves besmirching the north. The E source, by contrast, was written by an author of the northern kingdom, possibly a Levitic priest, who endorsed the north's political structure but attacked its religious establishment. Both J and E appear to have been written between 922 and 722 BCE. Shortly after the fall of the north to the Assyrians in 722 and during Hezekiah's reign in the south, J and E were spliced or *redacted* together into a single document as a conciliation to the northern Israelites who had

migrated to Judah. In reaction to the influx of northern priests, the P source was created as an alternative to the JE story. One hundred years later, during the reign of Josiah, the framework of the D source was written around an old law code as a catalyst for religious reform. The D source is the first part of a larger historical sequence encompassing Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, compiled and edited by a single historian. The complete sequence of texts, called the Deuteronomistic History, details God's covenant with David for an unbroken royal lineage and rejection of local altars in favor of a single sacrificial site at the temple in Jerusalem. Finally, all four sources (JE, P, and D) were redacted together into the five books of Moses, the *Torah*, by a priest (possibly Ezra) during or shortly after the Babylonian exile.

From 300 BCE until about 200 CE, the notion of an official Jewish canon of scriptures was fluid, even after the council of Jabneh in 90 CE. Hundreds of religious texts appeared which were considered authoritative by many at this time. Although the authority of these texts was rejected by later Jewish scholars, even today they continue to have historical importance. These writings are classified into three collections: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and

Dead Sea Scrolls (the Dead Sea Scrolls will be discussed later).

The term *Apocrypha* is Greek for *concealed* and refers to thirteen texts which at one time were associated with the Jewish canon, but were officially rejected at the council of Jabneh. The original source of the Apocrypha is a Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures called the Septuagint (meaning "70"), so called because 72 Jewish scholars were brought to Egypt to create a Greek translation of Jewish scriptures between 285-246 BCE. Legend has it that each translated the first five books within 72 days, compared the various translations, and found them to be exactly the same. Completed around 100 BCE, the Septuagint contains the thirteen Apocryphal books interspersed among the other books of the *Tanakh*, with no clear distinction in importance. The thirteen books include Esdras 1 and 2, Tobit, Judith, the rest of the book of Ester, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch, a Letter of Jeremiah, additions to the Book of Daniel (the Song of the Three Children, Susanna, and Bell and the Dragon), the Prayer of Manasseh, and Maccabees 1 and 2.

The term *Pseudepigrapha* means "writings with false subscriptions" and refers to a collection of 52 Jewish religious writings from 200 BCE to

200 CE, attributed to ideal figures in Jewish history such as Abraham and Moses. In literary styles paralleling those of the *Tanakh*, its four theological themes are the origins of sin and evil, God's transcendence, a coming Messiah, and the resurrection of the dead. The Pseudepigrapha is important in showing the diversity of Jewish theology at this time and the development of doctrines such as the Messiah, which are only hinted at in the *Tanakh*.

GREEK RULE AND THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH.

Although the final events reported in the Tanakh take place around 430 BCE, the religious drama of the Jewish people continues in post-exilic sectarian writings, considered scriptural in many Jewish circles at the time. The Persian Empire collapsed in 333 BCE during Alexander the Great's campaign for world domination. The next year Judea also fell under his control. After Alexander's death, the empire was divided between four of his generals, whose dynasties were committed to Hellenization, the propagation of Greek culture. Judea was passed back and forth between two dynasties of the divided empire: the Selucid Dynasty of Persia, and the Ptolemaic Dynasty of Egypt. From 301-198 BCE life was peaceful under the Ptolemies. Then it changed hands to the Selucids. By 165 BCE, the extreme Hellenizing policies of Selucid King Antiochus Epiphanes reduced central Jewish religious rites to capital crimes. For many young Jews their heritage became an embarrassment, as evidenced by a frequently practiced surgical reversal of circumcision. The Jewish-Greek rift was intensified further by the advocacy of these Hellenizing policies by Jewish High Priests themselves. Loyal Jewish writers sought a divine

explanation for this crisis which threatened their very existence. They wrote apocalyptic texts reporting vision-like revelations about a Messianic deliverer, a cataclysmic end to the empires of their oppressors, topped by final divine judgment. The Book of Daniel in the Tanakh is thought to be an apocalyptic work from this period. One of the most well known apocalyptic texts of this time is the First Book of Enoch, of the Pseudepigrapha. The work, written by several authors between 200 BCE and 100 CE, reflects traditional apocalyptic themes, specifically the role of the "Son of Man" who will free the Jews from foreign domination:

This Son of Man whom you have seen is the One who would remove the kings and the mighty ones from their comfortable seats and the strong ones from their thrones. He shall loosen the reins of the strong and crush the teeth of the sinners. He shall depose the kings from their thrones and kingdoms. [First Enoch, 46]

MACCABEAN REVOLT AND THE HASMONEAN DYNASTY.

The Book of Maccabees chronicles the clash between Hellenistic and Jewish culture. Written about 100 BCE and included in the Septuagint, the Book of Maccabees, is the primary source of information for this period of Jewish history. The ultimate Selucid assault against the Jewish religion was the erection of an altar to Zeus in the temple upon which pigs were sacrificed. Further plans were made to confiscate land from Jews who followed their traditions. In revolt, an old priest named Mattathias killed a commissioner who had ordered him to sacrifice to Zeus. Gathering his five sons and followers, he fled to the desert. From there his son Judas Maccabeus launched a guerrilla attack, recapturing Jerusalem, and restoring worship. Although the Selucid army responded to the revolt, the Selucids could not engage in a protracted guerrilla war, and ultimately recognized Judea as a semi-independent temple-state. The Maccabean leaders declared themselves a dynasty of Priest Kings, also called the Hasmonean Dynasty, and for the next hundred years engaged in relatively independent, although frequently despotic, rule.

The Hasmoneans greatly expanded Judea's borders and fortified key cities. It is probably during this time that synagogues emerged as centers for local religious education and worship. According to Josephus, noted Jewish historian of the first century CE, three religious orders also emerged: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. The Pharisees were priests and lay people who adopted a priestly life; they were proponents of oral tradition, purity rituals, a Messianic kingdom, and the resurrection of the dead. They were also dedicated teachers of these doctrines to the masses. The Sadducees were aristocratic and priestly rivals of the Pharisees, and denied many of their doctrines, especially those listed above. They also competed with the Pharisees for political influence in the Sanhedrin, the legislative assembly of Judea. The Essenes shared key doctrines with the Pharisees, such as food rituals, a Messianic kingdom and the resurrection of the dead. However, they became disgusted with the tyrannical rule of the Hasmoneans and the quarreling religious leaders, and established a monastic community in the desert along the Dead Sea.

20th century archeology has greatly added to our knowledge of Jewish religious life during this period, most notably in the discovery of the the

Dead Sea Scrolls. The Scrolls are a collection of writings and fragments discovered between 1947-1960 CE in the Qumran Valley area on the northwest shores of the Dead Sea. The religious community of Qumran was established around 200 BCE as a desert haven against the oppressive political and religious realities of the time, and was destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans during the Jewish revolt. The Messianic community was preparing to be joined by angels for a final war against evil on earth. Although the Qumran community is often identified with the Essenes as described by Josephus, its association with that or any other sect is uncertain. Scriptures of the Qumran community were discovered in 1947, and made fully public in 1991. The writings include the earliest copies of many texts of the *Tanakh* as well as an array of previously unknown religious texts. When first discovered, the new documents were thought to represent the unique views of the post-exilic monastic community. More recently, however, some historians believe they originated in Jerusalem, the center of Jewish religious activity, and thus, like the Pseudepigrapha, reflect the broad range of Jewish scripture at the time. At least some of the writings, though, are specific to the community itself. The Qumran's Community Rule, for example, describes our dual human nature as consisting

of a spirit of truth and a spirit of error, which are the sources of proper and improper conduct, respectively. Reminiscent of Zoroastrianism, God has "established the two spirits in equal measure until the last period." Followers of truth, the Sons of Light, will ultimately wage a victorious war over followers of error, the Sons of Darkness.

ROMAN DOMINATION.

Hasmonean rule of Judea ended in 63 BCE when a civil war broke out between Jewish parties. Roman general Pompey was called in to arbitrate, but instead occupied Judea and declared it a Roman province. The first Roman governors were particularly brutal, enslaving or crucifying those who disobeyed. A cunning Jewish governor from Galilee, Herod the Great, was soon appointed King of the Jews in 37 BCE. Herod had non-Jewish ancestry and was never completely accepted by the Jews. Preoccupied with conspiracies against him, Herod built massive fortifications for protection. He also rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple on a grand scale. But taxation for these projects economically crippled the peasant population. After Herod's death in 4 BCE, the Romans appointed a series of governors who were insensitive to the religious practices and economic concerns of the people. Growing anti-Roman sentiment among the peasants led to a series of minor revolts in which thousands of Jews were massacred. Incited by an oracle that a Jewish messiah would rule the world, a territory-wide peasant revolt finally erupted in 66 CE. Although initially successful, the Romans marched on the rebellious Jewish territories, destroying everything in their path. Most

importantly, the elaborate new temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, bringing an end to temple sacrifices in 70 CE. Many Jews were sold as slaves, and the Jewish territories forfeited statehood status within the Roman Empire.

The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple was another landmark tragedy upon which Jewish writers focused. An interesting apocalyptic vision of this event is from the pseudepigraphic Sibylline Oracles. In Greek mythology, the Sibyl is a aged prophetess who predicts disaster while in an ecstatic state. The oldest Greek myths recount a single Sibyl, but by the middle ages writers postulated ten, each residing in a distinct Mediterranean area, foretelling tragedy at different periods of time. In Jewish tradition, the Sibylline Oracles are a complex patchwork of apocalyptic oracles written between 200 BCE and 600 CE which were pseudepigraphically attributed to the various Sibyl. The following passage was written about 80 CE.

An evil storm of war will also come upon Jerusalem from Italy, and it will sack the great Temple of God, whenever they put their trust in folly and cast off piety and commit repulsive murders in front of the Temple. ... A leader of Rome will come to Syria who will burn the Temple of Jerusalem with fire, at the same time

**slaughter many men and destroy the great
land of the Jews with its broad roads.
[Sibylline Oracles, Book 4]**

With the temple in ruins for three generations, in 132 CE Jewish peasants and leaders were easily seduced by the messianic leader Simeon Bar Kokhba, who promised to restore the temple. His unsuccessful three-year revolt brought more destruction to the country and a massive disbursement, or *Diaspora*, of the Jews throughout Europe. Jerusalem became officially off limits to all Jews, and the country was ironically renamed *Palestine*, after the ancient Philistines, arch-enemies of the early Israelites. With the Diaspora, the center of Judaism shifted from Jerusalem to Babylonia, where a large population of Jews remained after the 586 BCE exile. At its peak, one million Jews lived in Babylon in the years following the exile and restoration.

RABBINIC WRITINGS.

After the destruction of the Temple, the figure of the Rabbi emerged as an authority in scriptural interpretation and Jewish law, and for the next first five Judaism witnessed a dramatic flourishing of literary activity among Rabbis. One such was the composition of verse-by-verse commentaries on the *Tanakh*, known collectively and stylistically as *midrash*. Another and more important type of activity was the development of oral law, culminating in the texts of the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. Traditionally, the oral law of Judaism is believed to have been given to Moses by God at Mount Sinai, and orally transmitted for 1,500 years. In view of its divine origin, the oral law is on the same scriptural plane as the *Tanakh*. Historically, the foundation of the oral law tradition is thought to have been laid with Ezra's *Great Synagogue*, continuing through the Pharisees, and then extensively developed by the *Tannaim*, scholarly Rabbis who lived during the first two centuries CE. Although the *Tannaim* resisted committing the oral traditions to writing, in 200 CE the Palestinian Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi did just that. This work is the *Mishnah*, a collection of sayings attributed to specific *Tannaim* and Rabbinic schools from the first two centuries CE. The sayings are

stylistically rhythmic, which facilitated their early memorization. Much of its content derives from the legal codes in the Torah, although it rarely quotes the *Tanakh* directly. The text contains six key divisions: agricultural rules, laws governing the Sabbath and holidays, laws on marriage and divorce, the system of civil and criminal law, rules of temple sacrifices, and rules of purities and impurities. .) The typical style of the Mishnah is a give-and-take legal debate between the Tannaim. The best known section of the Mishnah is Abot (literally fathers), also called Wisdom of the Fathers. (This section was considered so important that medieval copies of the Talmud have Abot as the conclusion of each of its six key divisions). Abot is different in that it is a collection of proverbs by the Tannaim which are not debated. Abot opens listing the transmitters of the oral law from Moses to the Tannaim themselves:

Moses received the Torah at Sinai. He conveyed it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets transmitted it to the men of the Great Assembly. The latter emphasized three principles: Be deliberate in judgment; raise up many disciples; and make a fence to safeguard the Torah.

Early Rabbis developed a tradition of commenting on the contents of the Mishnah. One collection, called the *Tosefta*, was written by the *Tannaim* themselves. After the *Tannaim*, two other groups of Rabbis continued commenting on the Mishnah: the *Amoraim* (from 200-500 CE.), and the *Saboraim* (from 500-700 CE.). Their comments became the basis of the *Talmud*, the grandest expression of this Rabbinic tradition. A first version of the *Talmud* appeared in 450 CE in Jerusalem, and a second and longer version in 500 CE in Babylon. Material was added to each version in the following century. Both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds have two parts: first, the text of the *Mishnah*, and second, the *Gemara*, which is a several-thousand page collection of comments on the *Mishnah* written by the *Amoraim* and *Saboraim*. Both Talmuds are structured according to the main divisions of the *Mishnah*, although the Babylonian *Talmud* covers more divisions than its Jerusalem counterpart and, thus, is more definitive.

The chief theological paradox of the Talmud is how collected opinions of early Rabbis can count as divine law. Although Judaism traces its oral law back to Moses, the Mishnah and Talmud

are, quite obviously, only collected sayings of the Tannaim, Amoraim, and Saboraim. Early Rabbis themselves were aware of this paradox and provide an answer in a dramatic parable in one of the most famous sections of the Talmud (Baba Mezia 59a-59b). A group of Rabbis were disputing an intricate point of Jewish law. One Rabbi, sought to defend his interpretation with a series of miracles. The opposing Rabbis, though, were not moved by this display:

If the law is according to my views, let this carob tree prove it. Thereupon the carob tree was thrust to a distance of a hundred cubits from its place, and some say four hundred. They replied to him: We adduce no evidence from a carob tree. Again he said to them: If the law is in accordance with my views, let the stream of water prove it, and at once the stream of water flowed in the opposite direction. But they said: We adduce no evidence from a stream of water.

Finally, with a voice from heaven, God himself confirmed the first Rabbi's interpretation. But the others were *still* not persuaded even challenge God's authority:

the Torah has already been given at Sinai, and we pay no attention to heavenly voices,

**for You have written at Sinai in the Torah:
"Incline after the majority"**

God laughed in response and said, "My children have won over me, my children have won over me!" The solution to the paradox of the oral law is that the majority position held by the carriers of oral law *becomes* the law. At that time, the sages of the Talmud were the carriers.

Typical of the times, women did not have equal religious status under Talmudic law. Although Rabbinic sages considered women "a nation apart" rather than inferior, women were nevertheless excluded from certain ceremonial rituals and from studying the Torah. Further, during menstruation and childbirth, women were considered unclean and were required to follow rituals of seclusion and purification. In other important ways the Talmud bucks trends of the day by acknowledging equal status for women under civil and criminal law, and insisting on monogamous marriages. In one such discussion (from the Talmud tractate Yebamot) a principal reason for marriage is that Adam, the original human, was created both male and female, and only later was separated into male and female bodies.

MEDIEVAL JUDAISM.

Babylonian Jews remained the dominant voice of Judaism until the Arab conquest of the region in the 7th century CE. In the centuries following, Jews of the Diaspora attempted to settle in communities throughout Europe, only to be forced out as host countries became intolerant of them. In the reshuffling, two distinct groups emerged, each with their own distinct language and religious rituals. The Saphardic Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal and moved to the Ottoman Empire. The Ashkenasic Jews were expelled from other countries and moved to eastern Europe.

An important theological development for Judaism in the middle ages was the cultivation of various mystical movements, most notably a form of mysticism called *Kabbala*. One of the earliest Jewish mystics was Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE.) who wrote a Hellenized, mystical commentary on the Pentateuch. Anticipating Plotinus, he believed there was a primary, concealed level of God, and two secondary levels: the logos, and the sensible universe. Union with God involves the awareness that we are part of the logos. *Tannaim* of the first two centuries CE, such as Rabbi Aqiba and Rabbi Ishmael, emphasized mysticism by describing visions of

the divine palaces (*keikhalot*) and the divine chariot (*merkavah*). This introduced a cosmic hierarchy into Jewish mysticism. A second century text called the *Shi'ur Qomah* (Measurement of the Divine Height) describes the limbs of the God as metaphors for his nature, and thereby offers a mystical investigation into the nature of God. In the fourth century, the *Sefer Yesirah* (Book of Creation) introduced the concept of the ten *sefirah*, which are ten emanations of God.

Since the 12th century, the most dominant school of Jewish mysticism has been Kabbala, which draws from all of the above expressions of mysticism. The classical statement of early Kabbala is found in two 13th century texts: *Sefer ha-Bahir* (Book of Brightness), and *Sefer ha-Zohar* (Book of Splendor). The multi-volume *Zohar* was so influential that within a few centuries it attained the status of sacred text among Kabbalists. This epic text was written between 1280-1286 by Moses de Leon, a Spanish Jew from Guadalajara. The hero of the book, Rabbi Shim'on, a second century CE *Tannaim*, presents to his followers a verse-by-verse mystical midrash on several books of the *Tanakh*. To gain a receptive audience and lend authenticity to its content, Moses de Leon claimed that his work was a recently discovered

ancient text written by Rabbi Shim'on himself. For almost 600 years, Kabbalists took Moses de Leon at his word. The next major development in Kabbala involved a 16th century mystical revival in the Palestinian city of Safed which maintained that mystical union should be achieved by every person, not just specialists. From this revival grew certain messianic movements in the 17th century, and Hasidic mysticism in the 18th century.

The key doctrine of early Kabbala as expressed in the *Zohar* is that of the Sefirot, which are ten emanations of God's personality. These attributes of the divinity permeate all of creation, including our personal lives. The *Zohar* does not systematically discuss the Sefirot and typically does not refer to them by their formal names. Instead, it relies heavily on metaphors, leaving it to the reader to make the association. One of the more famous passages from the *Zohar* is an account of creation which is presented as a midrash on the first clause of the Book of Genesis, "In the beginning...." The passage describes how God, Eyn Sof, or the Infinite, created two primary Sefirot. The first is Hokhmah (wisdom) and is the primal point of God's emanation. The second is Binah (derivative wisdom) and is the prime mother

who receives seed from Hokhmah, and gives birth to seven lower Sefirot.

MODERN JUDAISM.

Beginning in the 18th century, Judaism evolved in several directions. The Hasidic movement was founded by Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760) as a mystical response to disillusionment in both Messianic hope (brought on by messianic pretenders of the previous century) and in Rabbinic legalism. Hasidism offered a more mystical and joyous approach to Judaism, particularly for the laity. Although Hasidim were at first persecuted by traditional rabbinic schools, eventually half of the traditional rabbis joined them. Followers of Baal Shem Tov were preachers, rather than theologians, and thus communicated orally rather than in writing. Their homilies were eventually put in writing by their sons or disciples. The Hasids describe God pantheistically, and maintain that God can be directly accessed. Another genre of writing also emerged from the Hasidic movement: the tale. These parable-like stories draw from events in peasant life and describe God more anthropomorphically, rather than pantheistically. The most distinguished of these are by the Ukrainian Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (1772-1810).

It was not until the 18th century Enlightenment that European countries finally granted civil rights to their Jewish citizens. As an outgrowth

of their freedom, Reformed Judaism was founded in Germany by Abraham Geiger in the 19th century. Geiger believed that Judaism should be confined more to the sphere of religion than to culture and that Jewish worship practices should be modified to parallel those of Protestant Christians. In reaction, the Orthodox denomination reaffirmed the traditional elements of Judaism. In an attempt to mediate between the reformed and orthodox views, the Conservative denomination emerged as an attempt to "conserve" historical traditions that the Reformed denomination had eliminated. Finally, in the 20th century the Reconstructionist denomination was founded by Mordecai Kaplan as a development from the Conservative denomination. Reconstructionists offer a more pragmatic approach in the modern world, placing more emphasis on the cultural development of Judaism rather than on its religious elements.

The Nation Of Israel.

The most dramatic events of Judaism within the 20th century involve the creation of the independent country of Israel and the resulting tensions between Israel and the surrounding Arab countries. From the 16th century Palestine was under the control of the Muslim Ottoman Empire and was largely populated with Muslim Arabs, with only a few thousand Jewish residents. In 1897 Hungarian writer Theodore Herzl (1860-1904) organized a movement called Zionism which advocated the creation of a Jewish nation-state in Palestine. Inspired by the Zionist movement, tens of thousands of Jews from around the world migrated to Palestine. At the close of World War I Palestine was passed from the hands of the Ottoman Empire to the British Empire. During the 1930s Jewish migration to Palestine jumped as a result of Nazi persecution when by 1939 their numbers reached a half a million, almost equaling the number of Muslim residents. Jewish presence in Palestine increased further during World War II, and at the close of the war revelations about Nazi concentration camp atrocities lent widespread international support for the Zionist movement. In 1947, the British handed Palestine over to the United Nations. The United Nations resolved to divide the area of Palestine into a

Jewish state and an Arab state, setting boundaries. The Arabs do not agree to a division, but in 1948 the Jews declared independence and took control of that part of the land designated by the United Nations. The new nation was called *Israel* and David Ben-Gurion was elected the first prime minister. United States immediately recognized its legitimacy.

For the next 30 years, Israel became involved in a series of wars with surrounding Arab countries in an effort to preserve its newly gained independence. In 1948-49 Israel fought a "War of Independence" against the Arabs, and expanded its borders beyond the original United Nation division. In 1956, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez canal, and Israeli forces joined the French and British in fighting Egypt. The United Nations intervened, forcing the invaders to withdraw and Egypt emerged from this conflict as the official spokes person for the Arab world regarding Israel. In 1967, Nasser believed he could overpower Israel and end its existence. Syria and Jordan entered the war on the side of Egypt. In the resulting Six Day War, the Arabs lost quickly, and Israel took control of the entire Egyptian Sinai Peninsula and the West Bank of the Jordan River. The defeat was a great embarrassment to the surrounding Arab countries, and in 1773,

during the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur, the new Egyptian president Anwar Sadat attacked Israel to regain the Israeli-held territory. The invasion was a surprise to Israel, but they ultimately push the Egyptian troops back. Failing to obtain his objective through force, Sadat adopted a more peaceful strategy of regaining Egypt's lost territory. In 1977 he flew to Israel and addressed their Parliament, and thereby became the first Arab country to recognize the existence of Israel. The resulting Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty (1979) required Israel to return the captured Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, which it did in April 1982. Although a diplomatic victory for both Egypt and Israel, Sadat's action was strongly condemned by other Arab countries.

With Egypt taking a more moderate view toward Israel, focus shifted to Arab dissent within Israel itself, namely the guerrilla war tactics of the Palestinian Liberation Organization headed by Yassar Arafat. PLO bases were established in the bordering country of Lebanon, just north of Israel, and in 1981 Israeli forces invaded Lebanon to attack the camps. The already weakened government of Lebanon collapsed, and warring Lebanese factions competed for power. Israeli troops finally withdrew in 1985. Continual PLO

pressure within Israel resulted in the creation of a Palestinian State in 1989 along the West Bank of the Jordan river, territory which became part of the country of Jordan in 1947, but was annexed by Israel in the six day war of 1967.

JEWISH RITUALS.

As noted, the religious festivals of Judaism commemorate events of their history. *Rosh Ha Shanah* is the Jewish celebration of the New Year, and commemorates God's creation of the world. It is celebrated for two days and marked by a ceremonial blowing of a ram's horn (*shofar*) during synagogue services. *Yom Kippur*, or the day of atonement, is celebrated 10 days after the New Year celebration and is distinguished by fasting and confession of sins. It was originally the single day of the year in which the high priest offered sacrifices within the inner sanctuary of the Temple. *Hanukkah*, which occurs during December, commemorates the reconsecration of the Jerusalem Temple during the Maccabean revolt from the Selucid Greeks in 165 BCE. It is also called the Festival of Lights, the Feast of Dedication, or the Feast of Maccabees, and is symbolized by the eight-branched candelabrum, or *Menorah*. *Passover*, perhaps the most important Jewish festival, commemorates the Exodus of the ancient Hebrew people from Egypt. Originally a pilgrimage festival, it later became an eight day festival. No labor is permitted on the first and last two days. During the first two nights of Passover, a ritual dinner meal takes place, called the *Seder*, which involves reading of

the *Haggadah* liturgy. Other noted Jewish festivals are the feast of *Purim*, which involves reading the scroll of Ester, *Shavout*, or the festival of tabernacles, and *Simhat Torah*, a holiday celebrating the completion of a one year cycle of public reading of the Torah

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CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is founded on the life and teachings of Jesus, a first century CE Jew who was executed by the Roman authorities for subversion. During its first few decades Christianity was a sect within Judaism, but quickly expanded beyond its Palestinian borders and Jewish framework, becoming an independent religion. Two elements of Christian doctrine are essentially Jewish. First, Jesus is the messiah, or anointed king, who is spoken of in Jewish prophetic writings. The term *christ* is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word messiah, and so Jesus is referred to as the Christ. Second, the message of Jesus is the kingdom of God. Keeping with Jewish apocalyptic notions of the messiah, early Christians expected that the kingdom would be established by cataclysmic events. A third element of Christianity departs from its Jewish heritage, namely, that Jesus is God in human form. Building on this, a fourth element is that, by his work, teachings, death and resurrection, Jesus became the savior of the world.

SOURCES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

Jesus left no writings, and the knowledge we have of his life and teachings comes almost exclusively from the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These narratives are traditionally ascribed to his disciples, but were probably written and compiled anonymously between 40 and 60 years after his death. They were also written by believers for believers, blending historical memories with early church teaching. Reconstructing an accurate picture of Jesus, then, is difficult, and, according to many theologians, impossible.

Scholars believe that for a few decades after Jesus' execution, the recollections of his immediate followers were transmitted orally. The first written accounts, from perhaps 50 CE, were simply lists of his sayings with no stories. None of these have survived intact. The book of Mark appeared around 70 CE, based on oral traditions of Jesus' life and teachings. Mark focuses more on activities in the life of Jesus than on teachings. His narrative is concise, matter of fact, and probably written for a non-Jewish audience in Rome about 70 CE. Since virtually the entire content of Mark's account is included in the longer gospels of Matthew and Luke (which use Mark as one of several sources), Mark's gospel was typically not the most

popular. However, as modern scholars try to identify the earliest recorded accounts of Jesus, preference is now given to Mark's narrative.

The books of Matthew and Luke appeared around 85 CE, both using information from Mark and an earlier lost list of sayings called *Quelle* (German for source). Matthew and Luke also contain unique stories and sayings, based on either oral traditions or earlier lost lists of sayings. Matthew's gospel was written for a Jewish audience, and it continually draws parallels from the Old Testament. The author of Luke was an educated non-Jewish Christian and, thus, his gospel reflects the broader non-Jewish implications of both Jesus' life and the Christian church. Mark, Matthew, and Luke are referred to as the synoptic gospels, since they give very similar accounts of Jesus' life and teachings. Finally, the Gospel of John appeared in 90 CE. Initially considered heretical by some early church fathers, it presents an account which is 90% different in content. The Gospel of John presents an account of Jesus which is almost entirely different from that of the synoptic gospels. In John, Jesus' ministry is three years, as opposed to one year; Jesus performs no exorcisms, Although Jesus performs miracles in both John and the synoptics, the purpose is different. In John, they are intentionally

performed as signs indicating his divine role, whereas in the synoptics, such signs are shunned and miracles are depicted mainly as acts of compassion. All four Gospels first circulated anonymously, and were only ascribed to the apostles during the middle second century. They have always been considered the most primary of all Christian texts.

JEWISH BACKGROUND

Jewish territories at that time were under especially oppressive Roman rule, which caused widespread unrest. Since the times of the independent Jewish monarchies hundreds of years earlier, 90% of the Jewish population consisted of agrarian peasants who supported the ruling priestly elite through taxes on their harvest. Additional taxes were imposed by the Romans, and still more to support local building projects, such as those of King Herod. By the time of Jesus, peasant taxes totaled about 40% of their harvest, which forced many into debt or sale of family land. Unemployment was also high. As the Romans reduced the size of Jewish territories, Jews from surrounding areas flooded into Judea and Galilee, the two principle territories of Jewish settlement. Occasional famine made economic times worse and intensified the rift between peasants and the ruling class, which supported the Romans.

Desperate peasants rallied around charismatic leaders who offered hope. Some supported social bandits who systematically robbed rich Jewish landowners and shared the wealth with the peasants. Others found comfort in the company of prophets who, in the tradition of the old Jewish prophets, pronounced apocalyptic judgment against the Romans and called the

people to repentance. Still others took refuge in the leadership of messiahs, that is, anointed kings. The concept of a messiah in Jewish literature did not become fixed until Rabbinic discussions after the revolt of 66. Prior to that, written discussions refer to a Davidic king, a prophet like Moses or a perfect priest, although the actual term messiah is rarely used. The notion of messiah in the minds of the illiterate peasants was somewhat different from that which appeared in the writings of the ruling elite. Although they retained the idea of kingship, they saw the anointing of this king as a revolutionary act of popular election. The messiah was to be a flesh-and-blood military leader, not just an apocalyptic figure waging spiritual war.

LIFE OF JESUS.

Jesus was born about 4 BCE. Two of the four canonical gospels give accounts of the birth of Jesus, each slightly different. Unlike Matthew, Luke begins by placing the birth story in the context of Roman emperor Augustus' reign. Jesus was raised in Nazareth, an insignificant agricultural city in the Galilee region. Little is known about Jesus until he began his ministry at about age thirty, during his association with John the Baptist, an apocalyptic prophet, who proclaimed impending doom. John baptized Jesus, and shortly after was executed by the ruler of Galilee, who feared that John's enthusiastic followers might provoke a rebellion. Jesus attracted his own followers in Galilee, who initially saw him as a popular prophet, rather more like John the Baptist than a political messiah. Of his large following of both men and women, later Christian tradition honored 12 as having special authority (although there is disagreement on who exactly the 12 were), possibly representing the twelve tribes of Israel. With his disciples, Jesus traveled around Galilee teaching, befriending outcasts, healing people, and performing exorcisms. He taught to both small gatherings in synagogues and to large peasant crowds in open-air places. His ministry lasted only a couple of years until he was

executed on a Roman cross. According to all four gospels, Jesus' supernatural powers were seen by the Jewish leaders as a threat to social and religious stability, inciting them to plot against him. The precise reasons for his execution may never be known. For John the Baptist, attracting large crowds in a revolutionary environment was enough to cost him his life. To the extent that Jesus appeared to be another popular prophet, Jewish and Roman leaders had reason for concern. Some scholars believe that after Jesus' death early Christians had to explain why the Jewish populace did not recognize Jesus as the messiah. Mark has an explanation which both Matthew and Luke adopt: Jesus purposefully kept word of his messiahship from circulating in order to minimize conflict with officials. Referred to as the messianic secret.

Jesus' final days took place in Jerusalem during the Jewish holiday of Passover. The four gospels depict Jesus and his disciples gathering for a meal, known as the "last supper" (Luke describes this as the traditional meal of the passover festival). At this meal, according to the synoptic gospels, Jesus performed symbolic acts with the bread and wine. This event is the basis of the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. After the last supper, Jesus went with his

disciples to a hillside graveyard to pray. There he was arrested, brought before the Jewish legal council, and accused of blasphemy. Not empowered to perform criminal executions, the council brought Jesus to the Roman governor Pilate, where they made a case for treason based on Jesus' messianic claims. Pilate pronounced the desired verdict and sentence. All four gospels place responsibility on the Jews, first the priests and then an angry mob, although the ultimate decision rested with the governor. Jesus was then executed on a cross, in classic Roman fashion, and placed in the rock-hewn tomb of a wealthy follower. Mark's gospel reports that after a few days the tomb was found empty, and a young man present at the tomb announced that Jesus was resurrected. The other gospels report appearances of the resurrected Jesus.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS.

Like the events of his life, Jesus' teachings in the gospels also blend his words with early church doctrine. Some scholars argue that less than 20% of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels were spoken by him. Matthew incorporates Jesus' sayings into five distinct discourses, possibly representing the five books of Moses, to symbolize a new Torah. The Sermon on the Mount is the first of these and, again, the mountain motif here parallels the story of Moses receiving the Law at Mount Sinai. Many of the teachings in Matthew overlap those in Luke, suggesting that they independently drew their information from a third source (i.e. the Q source). Thus, sayings in the Sermon on the Mount also appear in Luke in a section often called the Sermon on the Plain (6:20-49). Matthew's discourse opens with a description of how the kingdom of God will involve a dramatic reversal of conditions for the oppressed and faithful. Citizens of the kingdom must distinguish themselves through obedience to a new law, principally one of love for others, forgiveness, and trust in God.

The dominant message that emerges in Mark, Matthew, and Luke is the kingdom of God. The "kingdom" is never defined, but is the final state of affairs in which the world runs according to

God's will. Paradoxically, some teachings proclaim that the kingdom will arrive in the near future, while others maintain that the kingdom has already begun. Although the concepts of both a future and present kingdom of God can be found in Jewish apocalyptic literature, Jesus is unique in making the doctrine of the kingdom the basis of ethical behavior. Moral acts of repentance, love, charity, and nonviolence are God's requirements for acceptance into the kingdom. Because of the urgency in preparing for the kingdom, uncompromising behavior is required. Jesus did not see himself as the messianic ruler of the kingdom he proclaimed, especially in view of the military implications of the popular messiahs.

Along with its content, the style of Jesus' teaching in the synoptic gospels is also important: the parable. Most broadly, a parable is a statement, story, or dialogue which has a metaphorical or figurative meaning. It can be as short as a single sentence, such as "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25), or paragraphs long. Understood this way, almost everything attributed to Jesus in the synoptic gospels is in the form of a parable. More narrowly, parables are extended metaphorical narratives, or

figurative stories, about 30 of which appear in the first three Gospels and the Gospel of Thomas (see below). In view of their figurative nature, the parables require interpretation, and sometimes an early Christian explanation is presented within the Gospel text itself. The interpretation of virtually all of the parables, though, relates to some challenging aspect of the kingdom. Like much of Old Testament literature, Jesus' parables follow specific literary structures. For example, Luke 11:9-10 follows step parallelism:

A Ask, and it will be given you

B Seek, and you will find

C Knock, and it will be opened to you

A' For everyone who asks receives

B' And he who seeks finds

C' And to him who knocks it will be opened

Even the longest narrative parables follow a combination of various parallel structures.

The two most famous of Jesus' parables appear only in Luke: the good Samaritan and the prodigal son. Luke sets both parables in a larger

narrative context. The good Samaritan parable is introduced in a dialogue between Jesus and a lawyer (adapted from Mark 12:28-34) on loving one's neighbor. Jesus then explains that the notion of one's neighbor crosses religious and social boundaries, just as a Samaritan aids a battered Jew, in spite of enmity between their two ethnic groups. The prodigal son parable is one of three which Jesus gives in response to criticisms that he associates with sinners. The parable's message is one of forgiveness. The father (representing God) forgives the younger son (representing non-Jews) who squanders his inheritance, while the dutiful older brother (representing Jews) protests.

Jesus' teachings are substantially different in the book of John. Unlike the synoptic gospels, in which Jesus speaks in short, crisp sayings and parables, in John Jesus speaks in extended discourses. The subject of eternal life is emphasized, and not the kingdom of God. Jesus refers to himself as the son of God, is the subject of his own teachings, and says little about the poor.

THE EARLY CHURCH

After his execution, strong leaders and apostles emerged within the Jesus movement, keeping its spirit alive and recruiting even more followers. Jesus was quickly seen as the crucified and risen messiah who would return from heaven at any moment and begin an apocalyptic (as opposed to military) reign. Old testament messianic prophecies were applied to him, bolstering the interpretation that Jesus was the Christ. The book the Acts of the Apostles, written about 85 CE, chronicles the events of the early Church after Jesus' resurrection. The book is sometimes termed the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, since the author depicts the expansion of the early church as being guided by the Holy Spirit. The Book of Acts is a continuation of Luke, penned by the same author, and discusses the spread of early Christianity immediately after Jesus. The opening of Acts recounts Jesus' Ascension into heaven and the arrival of the holy spirit a few days later, during the Jewish agricultural festival of Pentecost. The believers are directly affected by the presence of the holy spirit, as evidenced by their speaking in foreign tongues. Peter emerges as the leader of the Church, and thousands of believers are baptized. Early interpretations of Jesus and his message varied greatly among the new followers. Some

followers sold their possessions and waited his arrival. Of particular concern is the relationship of Christianity to Judaism in view of the large numbers of non-Jewish converts. More than half of Acts chronicles the conversion and missionary journeys of Paul.

After a dramatic conversion experience and a period of indoctrination, Paul, a former Pharisee who previously persecuted the Jews, soon rose in the leadership to the status of an Apostle. During three missionary journeys in non-Jewish territories throughout the Mediterranean region, he established dozens of churches and corresponded with many of them. 14 books of the New Testament are letters ascribed to Paul. However, only seven are confidently traced to him (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). His letters, composed between 50-60 CE, contain encouragement and instructions to the churches he helped establish, but they did not gain a wide readership until the end of the first century. Written about 55 CE, Paul's letter to the church of Galatia is a pivotal text in the development of early Christianity, and is the earliest written discussion of first century church politics. Shortly after his visit, church members in Galatia were persuaded by Christian Judaizers

that adherence to Jewish law was a prerequisite for becoming a Christian. Thus, Christians were still bound by traditional Jewish laws, such as circumcision and food rituals. Paul argues vehemently that obedience to Jewish law will not absolve our sins. Justification/righteousness comes about only through faith in Christ, and this is open to Jews and non-Jews alike. The larger issue in the debate was whether Christianity was merely the messianic fulfillment of Judaism, and thus a Jewish sect, or a distinct religion. Paul describes his efforts to set Christianity apart from its Jewish framework. An immediate theological difficulty faced by Paul was the question of how Jesus could be divine despite his criminal execution. Paul's solution was to see Jesus' death on the cross and subsequent resurrection as the end of the old Jewish law and the beginning of a new era of divine grace. Through baptism, Christians symbolically participate in the cross by dying to their old lives and re-emerging anew. The crucifixion and resurrection are so central to Paul's teaching that they are the only features of the life of Jesus with which he is concerned. In Paul's first letter to the church of Corinth, written about 55 CE, life after death is also linked to the resurrection: because Christ resurrected, we are assured that we too will be. Unlike Greek writers, who construe life after

death as the continuation of a bodiless, immortal soul, Christian doctrine holds to the bodily resurrection of the dead as found in post-exilic Jewish writings. Paul teaches that our new bodies will be heavenly and imperishable in nature, rather than earthly and perishable, and that all those who belong to Christ will be simultaneously resurrected when he returns.

EARLY CHURCH DOCTRINE.

The doctrine of the Trinity, central to Christianity, holds that God is a unity of three persons: the father, son, and holy spirit. Although the term "Trinity" and its technical meaning were developed by early Church fathers, passages that associate the father, son, and holy spirit are the scriptural basis of the doctrine. The following is particularly important in this regard. The holy spirit is only briefly mentioned at the end of this passage. In the Old Testament occasional references are made to a spirit of God, but John and other New Testament writers expand on this notion and see the holy spirit both as a divine presence and as an agent of guidance for the church. In Christian doctrine, a sacrament is a visible religious rite that confers special grace. The number of sacraments has varied throughout Christian history; twelfth-century theologian Hugo of St. Victor listed 30. Baptism and the Eucharist have always been the most important.

The term Apostolic Fathers was coined in the 17th century in reference to a collection of writings attributed to followers of the original apostles. The 14 texts now included under this label were not only popular in the early church, but some were included in scripture lists by early church fathers. Of particular interest in

this collection is the Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve, which gives instructions on baptism, fasting, prayer, and the Eucharist. Discovered in 1873, the Didache is a manual of early church doctrine from the Syrian church of Antioch. Eusibius, a fourth century Bishop, notes the high value placed on the Didache by early churches. Although the original date of the work is disputed, scholars believe that some parts are of first-century origin and contemporaneous with the gospels. The brief work can be divided into four parts. The opening lists a series of moral injunctions culled from various parts of the Bible. Instructions concerning food, baptism, fasting, and prayer ritual follow. Next, instructions are given on receiving new prophets, apostles, and Christians. Finally, a warning is given concerning the return of Jesus.

The expression New Testament Apocrypha is applied loosely to a range of early Christian texts, mostly from the second century, that are not included in the New Testament. Many of these were considered sacred by early churches and are the source of Christian beliefs, such as the assumption of Mary. Frequently they aim to fill gaps in the chronologies of Jesus' life and the early church. Paralleling the genres of New Testament texts, the writings fall into the categories of gospels, acts, epistles, and

apocalypses. They are of particular value as a possible source of stray sayings of Jesus which continued to circulate into the second century.

Early Christians were interested in accounts of Jesus' childhood which filled the gaps in the four gospel narratives. Many childhood gospels circulated, but most of the information in these derive from two texts written about 150 CE: the Infancy Gospel of James, and the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. The Infancy Gospel of James, also called the Protoevangelium, or first gospel, is pseudonomously ascribed to James, the brother of Jesus, and scholars believe that its author was a non-Jewish Christian from outside of Palestine. The text presents the oldest account of the early life of Mary, including her espousal to Joseph, and describes the virgin birth of Jesus. The tradition of Mary's life-long virginity runs counter to statements in the gospels referring to Jesus' brothers. The Infancy Gospel of James reconciles these two traditions by presenting Joseph as a widower with children from his previous marriage. The feast of Mary's presentation in the temple (November 21) in Catholic and Orthodox traditions is based on events in the selection below. Written about 150 CE, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas was among the most popular apocryphal writings in the early church. The text deals with Jesus'

childhood up to his twelfth year. The youthful Jesus is presented as having deadly divine powers, which he angrily uses to get his way. As he grows, though, his sense of moral responsibility progressively develops, and he uses his powers to heal rather than harm. The story provides an interesting commentary on the divine and human natures of Jesus: his power and knowledge are fully divine, but his conscience and emotions are human and require maturing. The text is reconstructed from several surviving manuscripts which vary greatly; some scholars believe that the original included sayings, although only the story lines are preserved.

GNOSTICISM.

The Christian tradition we inherit was defined in reaction to and in competition with early alternatives. The New Testament canon and early church hierarchy are products of the winning tradition, whereas the losing traditions were branded as heresies along the way. One unsuccessful early interpretation of Christianity was offered by Gnosticism, a diverse religious movement which flourished throughout the Near East from 100-400 CE. The aim of the Gnostic religion in general was to free one's spirit from the illusions of the evil, material world and re-ascend to heaven. Release was to be accomplished by acquiring special knowledge (gnosis). In Christian Gnosticism, the material world was created by an evil demigod, and Jesus' teachings provide the knowledge that redeems us from worldly illusion. Church leaders reacted vehemently to the Gnostic interpretation, penning many polemics against it.

The study of early Christianity was redefined with the 1945 discovery of Gnostic texts in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The 45 texts are fourth and fifth century Coptic translations of Greek manuscripts, although the originals go back much earlier. Representing both Christian and non-Christian Gnostic ideas, they are thought to be the library of an early Gnostic Christian

monastery which buried the documents in containers for protection. The texts suggest that early Christianity was much more theologically diverse than initially believed, and that the lasting tradition was only one among several viable alternatives.

Many Gnostic texts contain feminine imagery typical of ancient mythology, which by 200 CE was removed from mainstream Christianity. Much of this imagery is cosmological, and it involves various layers of God's being and creative activity. Some Gnostic texts portray God as having both a male and female quality: God is the primal father and the mother of all things. Others describe God as radiating divine beings or personalities, one of which is the female spirit of wisdom, the womb of everything. Finally, and most interestingly, several texts depict the divine Trinity as the father, mother, and son. In addition to their feminine theological themes, Gnostic texts defend the role of women as teachers of divine knowledge. This is most evident in the Gospel of Mary (named after Mary Magdalene) where, after Mary presents some private teachings of Jesus, her authority is first challenged by Peter, and then defended by Levi.

The jewel in the crown of Gnostic texts of Nag Hammadi is the Gospel of Thomas, which

broadens our understanding of the historical Jesus. The text is a sayings gospel insofar as it contains no story line, and little dialogue. The 114 sayings are organized around particular catchwords, but do not systematically develop themes. Although the text was ultimately compiled in the second century, it may be based on an original core of short sayings written about 60 CE. These, in turn, come from orally transmitted accounts of Jesus' teachings. Thus, like Q, these may represent the earliest strata of sayings attributed to Jesus. The challenge for scholars is to identify that core from embellishments penned by later writers. A Gnostic component of the text suggests that these are secret teachings of Jesus, knowledge of which will free one's spirit from the material world. Many of the sayings parallel those found in the four canonical Gospels. Some of the parables in Thomas are more concise and thus, perhaps, earlier than their canonical counterparts (8, 9, 57, 63, 64, 65). A large group of sayings is unique to this text, although it probably did not originate with Jesus (15, 17, 18, 19). Most interesting, however, are two sayings that scholars believe originated with Jesus, but which are absent from the canonical gospels:

97. Jesus said, The [Father's] imperial rule is like a woman who was carrying a [jar]

full of meal. While she was walking along [a] distant road, the handle of the jar broke and the meal spilled behind her [along] the road. She didn't know it; she hadn't noticed a problem. When she reached her house, she put the jar down and discovered that it was empty.

98. Jesus said, The Father's imperial rule is like a person who wanted to kill someone powerful. While still at home he drew his sword and thrust it into the wall to find out whether his hand would go in. Then he killed the powerful one.

CHURCH HIERARCHY

While theologians battled over doctrine, churches were established throughout the Roman Empire, and Bishops – reputedly successors of the original Apostles -- officiated in key regions. At first Roman rulers did not distinguish between Christians and Jews. But the rapid advance of Christianity soon made the distinction apparent, and, from their perspective, threatened the unity of the Empire. Christianity was outlawed and, throughout the first three centuries CE, several emperors systematically persecuted Christians, some bent on their extinction. A decisive turning point came when the Christian emperor Constantine took the throne, and in 313 CE he proclaimed complete religious liberty for Christians. He sponsored a world church council, at Nicea, which determined that Christ was not subordinate to God, but substantively identical with God.

The Nicene Creed was initially composed during the early church period and adopted in revised form at the Council at Nicea in 325 CE. It was further modified at the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE., although some scholars believe it took its penultimate form at the Council at Chalcedon in 451 CE. Today, the Nicene Creed remains the most popular

confession of faith in Catholic, Orthodox, and most Protestant liturgies, although Orthodox churches omit the filioque clause.

I believe in one God the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, begotten of his father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the father and the son, who with the father and the son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one

baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The council also established the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria as the primary officiators of the Church; later the bishop of Constantinople was added to the list. In 392 CE Emperor Theodosius declared Christianity the only allowable religion throughout the empire.

Early Christian traditions typically traced their lineage back to an original follower of Jesus. Early Gnostics viewed Jesus' brothers, James and Thomas, as their founders. For Ethiopians, the founder is the eunuch of Acts 8. For the Orthodox of Constantinople, he is Andrew the Apostle. The catholic church, though, considers its foundation to be Peter, the first supreme Pope. The concept of the Petrine Papacy is based on two doctrines. First, the doctrine of apostolic succession maintains that the original apostles had authority over specific regional churches, which they passed on to their successors. Peter established the church of Rome and, at his death, authority was passed to Linus. Second, the doctrine of the primacy of Peter, forged in the third through fifth centuries, maintains that Peter was given supreme

authority over all church congregations. The argument for this latter claim is based on the following passage from Matthew. Drawing from a scene in Mark 8:27 in which Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, Matthew then recounts that Jesus rewarded Peter with keys to the kingdom of God. Although the language is metaphorical, Peter is clearly given sweeping authority, thus indicating Matthew's allegiance to the Petrine tradition.

FORMATION OF THE VULGATE.

The primary body of scriptures in the Christian tradition is the Bible, containing an Old and New Testament. The Old Testament is the Jewish Tanakh, which makes the Christian Bible unique among world scriptures by including the canon of a different religion. The Christian Old Testament was initially based on the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Jewish canon from 100 BCE. Accordingly, the Old Testament retains the book arrangement of the Septuagint. Catholic and Orthodox Christians also accept the apocryphal books from the Septuagint, although Protestants reject these, opting for what they believe are the older books as appear in the Jewish Tanakh. The term Old Testament was coined by Paul, who used it in reference to the writings of the Mosaic covenant (2 Cor. 3:14). The principal value of the Old Testament for Christianity is that Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of its covenants and messianic prophecies.

By the fourth century CE, the term New Testament was commonly used to refer to a collection of 27 early Christian texts composed in Greek. Traditionally they are thought to be written by the original Apostles who were Jesus' followers. Historically, though, all of the texts are now thought to be written by second and

third generation Christians from 50-150 CE. For the first few centuries, there was no fixed New Testament canon, and manuscripts of hundreds of individual Christian texts circulated independently among the early churches. Early church fathers made recommendations as to which of these were authoritative. The first known list containing the present 27 books appears as a side comment in St. Athanasias' Easter letter of 367 CE.

As Latin became the spoken language of the Roman Empire, Latin translations of the Old Testament and various Christian texts circulated. In 382 the Pope commissioned Jerome, a priest and scholar, to bring order to the chaotic collection of Latin

texts. Returning to Hebrew and Greek language texts, Jerome produced a new Latin translation of the Old and New Testaments, referred to as the Vulgate, which, after some resistance, was accepted as definitive. Even with a more fixed canon, early theologians questioned the authority of several Old and New Testament texts and introduced a distinction between protocanonical and deuterocanonical texts: canonical writings with either a primary or secondary status. In the 13th century the traditional chapter divisions were added to each

book of the Bible by a Cardinal who was preparing a Biblical index.

EASTERN ORTHODOXY.

During the 4th century CE, the vast Roman Empire became too difficult to manage from a single location, so it was regionally divided, with the western territory governed by Rome and the eastern territory governed by Constantinople. Now inseparably tied to empire politics, the Church too established parallel jurisdictions. The western jurisdiction, later designated catholic, was led by Rome's bishop, or Pope, and the eastern (or orthodox) jurisdiction, looked, less formally, to Constantinople's bishop, or Patriarch. Differences of worship and authority further divided the regions, such as the east's use of icons, rejection of Papal authority, and emphasis on Christ's divinity above his humanity. At the local Council of Toledo in 589 CE., the sentence "I believe in the Holy Ghost ... who proceeds from the father" was expanded to read "who proceeds from the father and the son (filioque)." The issue involves whether the Holy Ghost originated from the father alone, or both the father and the son. Known as the filioque clause, its inclusion provoked discord with the Eastern Orthodox churches, and became their rallying cry in the Great Schism of 1054. The filioque clause was definitively added to the creed by the Catholics at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. The rift was complete in 1054

when Rome's Pope Leo IX and Constantinople's Patriarch Michael Cerularius mutually excommunicated each other. Since the great catholic-orthodox schism, the three original eastern church jurisdictions (Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople) have multiplied to over 20, each with its own Patriarch. Although the Orthodox jurisdictions govern independently, they are unified by shared liturgy and doctrine.

From as early as the sixth century, the dominant form of mystical contemplation in Eastern Orthodoxy involved continuously repeating the Jesus prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." By the 13th century, recitation of the Jesus prayer was supplemented with techniques of regular breathing, and taking postures with one's chin placed on the chest, eyes fixed on the heart. The purpose of this technique, known as hesychasm (literally stillness), was to clear one's mind from all distraction and directly encounter God within one's heart. The heart was the focal point of the Jesus prayer since Hesychists believed it to be one's spiritual center. Hesychasm was violently attacked in the 14th century by those who maintained that direct encounter with God was impossible. Nevertheless, Hesychasm was too firmly grounded in monastic practice, and thus

was confirmed by Orthodox councils in 1341 and 1351. Eastern Orthodox mystics in particular view as sacred a collection of more than 30 mystical texts written between the fourth and fourteenth centuries and known as the Philokalia. The texts, part of the monastic libraries of Mt. Athos, Greece, were written by ascetic monks as guidebooks for other monks on successful ascetic living. First published in 1782, the collection went through several translations, and a greatly expanded five-volume Russian edition appeared between 1867-1890. Many of the texts are how-to guides for overcoming the bodily and mental distractions that Satan creates in order to deter mystics. Others explain various techniques for contemplation and direct encounter with God. The texts of the Philokalia were not only cherished by the medieval ascetics who followed their practices but, since their publication, also by lay orthodox mystics.

After the fall of the western Roman empire from barbarian invasions in the 5th century, missionary journeys spread Christianity throughout northern Europe. The Pope was on a par with emperors of new and primitive European states, and Christian monasteries were the default centers of learning. By the 15th century, growing discontentment with Catholic hierarchy erupted in the Protestant reformation.

MEDIEVAL MYSTICISM AND THEOLOGY.

Four mystical essays by an unknown 5th century author named Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite were greatly valued among mystics, especially the *Mystical Theology* which maintains that the highest knowledge of God is attained by way of negation. Acts 17:34 mentions an Athenian convert of Paul's named Dionysius, a member of Athens's high court, the Areopagus. Eusebius, fourth century church historian, reports that Dionysius became bishop of Athens, and was later martyred. An unknown author of four mystical essays pseudonymously ascribed them to Dionysius, thereby guaranteeing their notice by his contemporaries. The pious fraud was more than successful, and the essays were consulted by mystics and scholars for the next millennia. One of these, the brief *Mystical Theology* was perhaps the single most influential text in medieval Christian mysticism. Pseudo-Dionysius argues that to know God directly one must progress through a series of assertions about what God is, and then denials about what God is not. The *Ladder of Divine Ascent* by John Climacus (580-650), abbot of the monastery at Mount Sinai, describes thirty rungs stretching from earth to heaven, symbolizing transition to the contemplative life.

Catholicism has a long mystical tradition which produced hundreds of texts, only a few of which can be mentioned here. Prior to the 12th century, comments on mystical practices were scattered and informal. 12th century writers such as Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141), and William of St. Thierry (d. 1148) systematized mystical doctrine and established key elements for later mystics. Foremost was the interiorized experience, affective piety, and patterns of "contemplation" (the term they used for what we now call "mysticism"). The German women's movement of the next century produced several mystics, including Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Elizabeth of Schonau. 14th century mystics include Julian of Norwich (1342-1413), a Benedictine nun who lived isolated in a small cell, and Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), a German Dominican monk, whose more pantheistic writings were pronounced heretical after papal investigation. The greatest work of 15th century mysticism is the Imitation of Christ, attributed to Thomas a Kempis (1379-1471), and that of the 16th century is The Interior Castle by Spanish Carmelite nun Teresa of Avila (1515-1582).

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), 16th century Spanish mystic, entered a Carmelite convent at

age 19. With St. John of the Cross she established the Discalced (barefoot) order which was more strict and wore only sandals. She had visions and raptures and, in her most memorable vision, an angel pierced her heart with a flaming arrow, which when removed left her with a love for God. Teresa's most systematic work the Interior Castle (1577), uses the metaphor of seven series of mansions to represent various stages of spiritual development. The mystic enters the castle door through prayer, and then roams the mansions' millions of rooms at will. She describes the fifth series of mansions as the Prayer of Union by which the mystic's soul is possessed by God. In the selection below, she explains the effects of this union using the analogy of a silkworm. The silkworm starts from a tiny egg which feeds on mulberry leaves, spins a cocoon, and emerges as a butterfly. The silkworm represents the soul, its nourishment is the Church, the silk house is Christ, and the spinning of the cocoon is the prayer of union. Thus, the union experience, which does not last even a half hour, transforms the mystic, and the new "butterfly" feels like a stranger in its new world.

REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation was born on October 31, 1517 when German priest Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed a revolutionary document to the door of Wittenberg Castle. The situation was ripe in the surrounding German states to revolt in mass against both the religious and political domination of the Catholic church. Several factors in the centuries preceding the reformation contributed to its realization. Early less successful attempts at reform by John Wycliffe (d. 1384) and John Hus (d. 1415) provided a starting point for voicing discontent. Renaissance mystics such as Meister Eckhardt (d. 1327) and Thomas a Kempis (d. 1471) reacted against the dogmas of rationalistic scholastic theology and offered a more inward and personalized approach to religious truth. Renaissance humanism challenged the ill-gotten power of Church leaders, ridiculed superstitious religious practices, and emphasized the spiritual significance behind religious rituals. Finally, Papal interference in European politics set Germany's political leaders against the entire institution of Catholicism.

As a young man Luther intended to go into law, but after a frightening experience during a thunderstorm he became an Augustinian monk. Luther had inward struggles about religious

hypocrisy and what was necessary to become righteous. In time he became professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, in Saxony, where he had a conversion experience in the tower room of the Augustinian Friary. Studying Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith" Luther was persuaded that God's forgiveness comes through faith alone. Luther was also bothered by the sale of indulgences, which was on the raise to pay for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica. He was particularly offended at Johann Tetzel, an indulgence peddler who came to the borders of Saxony. Local churches competed by offering similar opportunities for remitting divine punishment. Wittenberg Castle Church itself contained 18,000 relics, collected by Frederic of Saxony, which, viewed for a fee, could take off up to 2,000,000 years in purgatory. Included among the relics were a baby slain by Herod, a twig from Moses' burning bush, pieces of Mary's girdle, feathers dropped by angels, and a tear shed by Jesus. In protest to all these practices, Luther nailed a document containing 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle (which functioned as a public bulletin board). Among the propositions, Luther maintained that God gives full remission of punishment and guilt to all who ask; indulgences are fraudulent, and foster deceit, immorality, skepticism and

irreverence; if the Pope cared for people, he would empty purgatory out of love, not for money. Luther was excommunicated by the Pope, but he quickly became a folk hero. To gain support for his proposed reforms, he published his "Appeal to the German Nobility" (1520) which urged the nobility to correct the abuses of the Church.

John Calvin (1509-1564) was a French born theologian and early Protestant reformer. He was raised Catholic, studied theology and law in Paris, and in his early years followed the intellectual path of Renaissance humanism. By 1534 Calvin allied himself with the reformation movement and quickly became influential among French reformers. For safety, he left Paris, and eventually moved to Geneva, Switzerland where, after a shaky start, he established a strict, almost theocratic local government. One of his laws, for example, prohibited any labor on Sunday -- including stoking one's fireplace in winter. He soon became the leader of the reformation in Switzerland (Presbyterianism) and France (Hugenotism). Calvin authored several theological works, the most important of which is *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. First published in 1536, the Institutes went through several revisions and by the final edition of 1559

was four times the original length. Fifty years after Calvin's death, followers of Calvin presented his theology in five points, known as the "five points of Calvinism." They are, (1) total depravity: humanity's complete nature is innately corrupted; (2) unconditional election: God predestines some to salvation; (3) limited atonement: salvation is restricted to those elected; (4) irresistible grace: the elect must accept God's favor; (5) perseverance of the saints: God sustains the elect in spite of their weakness.

The Vulgate continued to be the official text of the Bible until the Protestant Reformation, when several modern language translations appeared, many of which removed the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha, or at least relegated them to an appendix. Verse divisions were also added at this time.

As surrounding European countries soon followed the reformer's lead, Luther believed that the protesters would remain theologically unified because God would guide each person toward the same interpretation of the Bible. This was not to be, and five centuries later, hundreds of Protestant denominations have emerged from disputes over doctrine. The largest Protestant denominations are the Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists,

and Episcopalians. The large denominations are often doctrinally divided among themselves; the more conservative emphasize evangelism and Biblical inerrancy, whereas the more liberal stress social concerns and metaphorical interpretations of the Bible. Pentecostal churches are part of a movement, rather than a single denomination, and stress spiritual gifts, such as prophecy and speaking in tongues.

CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS.

Keeping with the religious freedom and pioneering spirit of 19th century America, various Christian movements produced sacred texts. The distinct beliefs of the Church of Latter-Day Saints are founded on the *Book of Mormon*, a text produced by founder Joseph Smith (1805-1844). Mormons believe that Smith translated the text from gold plates buried during a previous age, the location of which was revealed to Smith in an angelic vision. Smith also translated a lost text of Abraham, made a series of prophecies, and was supposedly divinely inspired with a new version of the Bible. These are included in the church's two other sacred writings: the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*. The *Book of Mormon*, published in 1830, chronicles the history and religious practices of a band of Israelites who migrated to America in 600 BCE. Under two leaders, two distinct conflicting cultures emerged: the civilized Nephites, and the nomadic and warring Lamanites. Ostensibly the forefathers of the native Americans, the Lamanites exterminated the Nephites. Anticipating their demise, Moroni, a Nephite Chronicler, buried a golden copy of the *Book of Mormon* to preserve their story. A 20 page section of the Book of Mormon describes how

Jesus visited the Nephites and gave them Christian Doctrine, much of which is paraphrased from the Gospels. Selections from this are below.

The Christian Science movement reveres *Science and Health* (1875) by founder Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), which emphasizes the healing aspect of Christianity. According to Eddy, the material world and all illness associated with it are unreal and illusory. Healing comes after prayer when God simply removes the afflicted person's false belief in the illusion. Associated with the New Age movement, American pastor Levi H. Dowling (1844-1911) produced the *Aquarian Gospel* in 1907 via automatic typewriting, which recounts 18 lost years of Jesus as he traveled to India, Tibet, Egypt, Persia, and Greece.

As scholars today discover older manuscript copies of Biblical books, passages are revised or deleted to reflect the earliest sources. For example, the well known story from John 9 of the stoning of the adulterous woman ("Let him who is without sin cast the first stone") is now removed from modern editions of the Bible.

* * * *

ISLAM

Islam's basic tenets are expressed in its most holy creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger." *Islam* means surrender, and adherents to the religion are called *Muslims*, meaning those who surrender. staunchly monotheistic, Islam sees Allah as the omnipotent creator God who, through a series of prophets, has called people to obedience. At the end of time, Allah will resurrect the dead, condemn the wicked to hell, and entrust believers to eternal peace in his garden. Following prophets such as Moses and Jesus, Muhammad is the final and greatest prophet, who delivered the definitive expression of Allah's voice in the Qur'an, Islam's most holy book. Drawing on Jewish narratives, Muslims trace their religious heritage from Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, and finally, to Ishmael, Abraham's first son. Muslim faith is embodied not only in religious practice, but in a social order governed by Islamic law.

TIME OF INGRATITUDE

The cradle of Islam was the Arabian Peninsula, during a period which Muslims contemptuously refer to as the *time of ingratitude*(*al-jahiliyyah*), that is, ingratitude towards God. Economically, desert conditions of the peninsula disallowed for wide-spread agriculture, so inhabitants depended on trade with the surrounding empires. When the Arabs later lost their spice monopoly, trading cities such as Petra died. As a convenient stopping place on well-traveled trade routes, though, Mecca survived as the prosperous center of trading in the Arab world. Politically, Mecca was plagued by warring factions involving their two main tribes, the Quraysh and the Khuza'a, each with divisive clans.

Religiously, inhabitants believed in a range of spiritual forces and deities. Belief in polydemonism prevailed, involving supernatural *jinn*, sprites, and demons, some good and others evil, which inhabited special objects or locations. Tapping into their ancient Semitic heritage, they set up shrines to various nature gods and goddesses. Hubal, god of the moon, was the principal deity of the Meccans, and before his idol people would cast lots and divining arrows. Three chief goddesses of Mecca, Al-Lat, Al-Manat, and Al-Uzza, were

worshipped. There was widespread belief in a creator deity, named Allah, who was high god of the regional pantheon. Sacred shrines with carved and uncarved stones were thought to be the dwelling places of these spirits and deities, and they became the focus of offerings and prayers. There was also a significant Jewish and Christian monotheistic presence. Large numbers of diaspora Jews, fleeing enemies for over a thousand years, settled in Arabia's desert. The Jews interacted well with their new neighbors, and many Arabs converted to Judaism. Hermit Christian monks settled in the desert regions, along with heretical Christian sects escaping the authority of the Roman Church. Muslim tradition also note the presence of pre-Islamic monotheists, known as *Hanif*, who carried the torch of Abraham's religion through the time if ingratitude.

Festivals and pilgrimages dominated the religious activities of the Meccans. Annual festivals lasting weeks drew inhabitants from throughout the peninsula to the two cities of Mina and Ukaz. With its 365 shrines, one for each day of the year, Mecca was a constant attraction to pilgrims. Meccan religious activity centered on the Ka'bah, an austere cubical structure housing idols, murals of the gods, and the Black Stone. The stone, believed to have

fallen from heaven, was the object of a special ritual in which naked pilgrims would circle it seven times and then kiss it. Muslim tradition maintains that the Ka'bah was originally built by Abraham.

EARLY YEARS OF MUHAMMAD.

Even a brief survey of world religions indicates that the lives of the religious founders are shrouded in legend, often to the point that their historical lives can no longer be recovered. Although many accounts of Muhammad are also legendary, Islam has the advantage of early written sources, not just by early Muslims, but by Muhammad himself.

Born about 570 CE, Muhammad was from the Hashimite family clan of Mecca, part of the Quraysh tribe. The clan's founder, from whom Muhammad descended, traced his lineage back to Ishmael, Abraham's first son according to Jewish legend. Muhammad's birth name is unknown, although his honorific title, *Muhammad*, means "highly praised." Tragedy marked his infant and childhood years. His father died before he was born, and as a minor under pre-Islamic law he was unable to acquire inheritance. He was entrusted to his grandfather who, according to one tradition, had him raised by a Bedouin foster mother. His natural mother died when he was six, and his grandfather two years later. Under the care of his uncle, he became involved with caravans. A story relates that the 12 year old Muhammad accompanied his uncle to Syria on a caravan, where he met a Christian monk who recognized

him as the future great prophet. Because of his reputation for honesty, Muhammad was soon entrusted with the leadership of caravans. A pivotal moment in his life arrived when, at 25, he led a caravan for a wealthy widow named Khadija. Although she was 15 years his senior, the two married, and for years she became an important source of encouragement for Muhammad. She bore him four daughters and three sons who died in infancy. Fatima, the most well known daughter, later married his cousin Ali.

According to his tribal custom, during one month of every year Muhammad retreated for religious reflection. He reflected on the good fortune given him by Allah, in view of his family and successful caravan career. He also thought about Jews and Christians who had a *book*, the Bible, by virtue of which they were prospering more than his own people. This moved him towards monotheism. Islam was born on the *Night of Power* (Laylat al-Qadr) when, on retreat in a cave outside of Mecca, the forty-year old Muhammad had a life-changing vision. In a voice like reverberating bells, the angel Gabriel approached him, commanding him to recite a phrase: "And the Lord is most Generous, who by the pen has taught mankind things they knew not." He went through a period of doubt for a

few months, even contemplating suicide, fearing he was an ecstatic visionary, an occupation not held in high esteem in his society. He also considered that he might be mad, or that he had heard the voice of a *jinn*. Eventually his doubts dispersed and his wife became his first convert, believing that he was a prophet. Muhammad's first revelation occurred on the Night of Power and is recorded in surah 96 of the koran.

Recite in the name of your Lord who created -- created man from clots of blood

Recite! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One, who by the pen taught man what he did not know.

Indeed, man transgresses in thinking himself his own master: for to your Lord all things return.

Observe the man who rebukes Our servant when he prays.

Think: does he follow the right guidance or enjoin true piety?

Think: if he denies the Truth and gives no heed, does he not know that God observes all things?

No. Let him desist, or We will drag him by the forelock, his lying, sinful forelock.

Then let him call his helpmates. We, in Our turn, will call the guards of Hell.

No, never obey him! Prostrate yourself and come nearer.

Visions and revelations of this kind continued throughout his life. They were recorded or memorized by others as they occurred, and then compiled into the text of the Qur'an. The moments of revelation began with Muhammad becoming entranced while shaking and sweating. Then, in rhymed prose, rhapsodies in Arabic flowed from his mouth. During his early prophetic career, the main points of his message were that Allah is the only God, that the dead will resurrect, and that Allah will judge all. Idolaters forfeit paradise and are blind to the powers of the creator. The opening surah of the Qur'an is the most commonly repeated prayer in Islam and an integral part of worship. Scholars give it an early date from about the fourth year of Muhammad's Meccan mission

Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe,

The compassionate, the Merciful,

Sovereign of the Day of Judgment!

You alone we worship, and to You alone we turn for help.

Guide us to the straight path,

The path of those whom You have favored,

Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,

Nor of those who have gone astray.

[surah 1]

After his wife, his next converts included his cousin Ali and a merchant named Abu Bakr, both of whom assumed leadership positions after Muhammad's death. As his following grew, the first Muslims experienced verbal attacks, threats, and later physical violence. The opposition was in part economically motivated by those whose livelihoods depended on religious pilgrimages to the Ka'bah; Muhammad's message of a single God, they assumed, threatened this. Many Meccan merchants assumed that a single god would draw fewer pilgrims than the many idols housed in their city.

For protection, Muhammad first sent a band of his followers to Ethiopia, where they were warmly received by local Christians. He and about 50 followers were then placed under siege in their Meccan neighborhood in an attempt to starve them into submission. Under pressure, Muhammad strangely reported a new revelation: along with Allah, the three key Meccan goddesses were acknowledged. The siege was then lifted, and the exiles returned from

Ethiopia. Later Muhammad announced that the new revelation was inspired by the devil, and the relevant passages were removed from his record of revelations. Hostility increased when his wife and uncle died. He tried to establish himself in an oasis town named Taif, about 60 miles southeast of Mecca, but failed.

LATER YEARS OF MUHAMMAD.

The turning point in Muhammad's mission occurred during a pilgrimage festival. He met residents of the northern city Yathrib who suggested that their people would be more receptive to him, in part because the city had many Jews who were awaiting the arrival of a prophet. The city was in political turmoil, and the residents believed that they could benefit from Muhammad's administrative skills. A period of negotiations followed. It was agreed that Muhammad would be the final arbiter of all disputes and that the various religious groups, including the Jews and Muslims, would be autonomous. The migration to Yathrib, called the *hijrah* (flight) began with around 100 of his follower's families. In 622 CE, at age 52, Muhammad joined them, fleeing Meccan authorities as he made the journey. This migration is so momentous for Islam that it marks the starting point of the Muslim calendar.

Muhammad quickly became a successful administrator and statesman, an accomplishment with which even his enemies agreed. He renamed the city *Medina*, city of the prophet. Living unpretentiously in a clay house and milking goats, he was ever available for consultation. He punished the guilty, but was merciful toward his personal enemies. Of his

several diplomatic marriages, his primary wife, A'isha, daughter of Abu Bakr, had particular influence over him, and is the source of many of the traditions later ascribed to him.

Although successful in Medina, hostilities with Mecca continued. Believing that he had a responsibility to provide for the Meccan emigrant followers living in Medina, Muhammad intercepted a caravan to Mecca for its booty. Attempting this a second time, his band of 300 encountered an army of 1,000 Meccans at a site called Badr. The ensuing battle was a victory for Muhammad. Not dissuaded, a few years later the Meccans launched a military offensive against Muhammad's army. Known as the Battle of Uhud, the Muslims were badly outnumbered, forced to retreat, and Muhammad himself was slightly wounded. Even so, the battle was a moral victory since the Meccans failed to eradicate Muhammad. Two years later the Meccans attacked Medina directly with a confederate army of surrounding cities and nomads. By recommendation of a Persian soldier in his camp, Muhammad ordered a trench dug around the entire city, a strategy which resulted in victory.

With each military victory (and moral victories like Uhud), his converts increased, and his

control over Medina became more firm. The Jewish population, which attracted him to the city, ironically failed to accept him as God's prophet. Some even aided the Meccans in their attack. Now with increased authority, Muhammad drove them out. His disappointment with the Jews had theological consequences as well. The Jewish and Christian elements of his religion were suppressed, and the traditional Arab elements were emphasized. No longer would Muslims pray facing Jerusalem, but towards Mecca. Qur'anic passages of this period enjoined Muslims to make pilgrimages to Mecca, which included circumambulation of the Ka'bah and kissing its black stone. Friday became the official day of rest, not Saturday or Sunday. During his rule in Medina, other central Muslim doctrines were established, such as fasting, alms giving, and ritual prayer. Social laws involving marriage, divorce, inheritance, and treatment of slaves and prisoners were also formalized.

In the fifth year of the migration, Muhammad and his followers approached Mecca with the intention of making a pilgrimage, but were met with resistance from the city leaders. The two sides reached a face-saving compromise, in which Muhammad and his followers withdrew, with the understanding that the next year they

would return and the city would be open to them for a pilgrimage. However, in the intervening year a Meccan broke the truce, and Muhammad responded by marching on the city. Realizing that they were unable to resist his force, the leaders of the city surrendered and bloodshed was avoided. Riding into the Ka'bah on his camel, with his own hands he smashed its 360 idols, declaring, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished." Thus, he reclaimed the shrine for God and announced a declaration of immunity: Muslims would no longer be bound by obligations to idolatrous tribes which repeatedly broke agreements with Muslims. Idolaters would also be barred from the Ka'bah.. All of Mecca converted, giving no resistance. The territory around the Ka'bah was declared sacred (*haram*), and non-Muslims were prohibited from entering the area. Muhammad then returned to Medina.

In the tenth year after his migration, he made a final announcement at the Ka'bah: "Today I have completed my religion for you and I have fulfilled the extent of my favor towards you. It is my will that Islam be your religion. I have completed my mission. I have left you the Book of Allah and clear commandments. If you keep them you will never go wrong." Shortly thereafter, reporting severe headaches, he died

while in A'isha's house and was buried on that spot. The Hadith narratives surrounding his death describe his companions' concern about a possible successor to Muhammad and their fear that Muhammad might become an object of worship. The following account of Muhammad's death, attributed to A'isha, maintains that Muhammad appointed no successor.

THE QUR'AN.

The Qur'an is the collected revelations of Muhammad written during the last 23 years of his life. It is the primary sacred text for all sects of Islam. The text is divided into 114 sections called *surahs*, in lengths varying from three verses to almost 300 verses. The term "Qur'an" means "to recite," in the sense that Muhammad is verbally delivering Allah's message to the people. The traditional arrangement of the *surahs* is neither chronological nor topical, but according to length, beginning with the longest and ending with the shortest. *Surah* titles are derived from a prominent or recurring word, such as Cow, Abraham, Mary, Angels, Muhammad, Divorce, Infidels. Every *surah* (save one) begins with the phrase, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate", which was probably the original indicator of the *surah* divisions.

The exact chronology of the *surahs* was forgotten even during Muhammad's life, and many short revelations from different periods were joined together to form longer *surahs*. Modern scholars have offered several chronological schemes for organizing the *surahs*, although traditional Muslims believe that such attempts compromise the inherent beauty of the non-historical arrangement. Nevertheless,

each *surah* is associated with either the Meccan or Medinan periods of Muhammad's life. The Meccan *surahs* are the earliest and reflect Muhammad's struggle to persuade his skeptical Meccan listeners to abandon polytheism and idolatry. They are shorter and more poetic than the Medinan sections, and they are characterized by vivid imagery. Meccan *surahs* describe the world's cataclysmic end and emphasize Allah's omnipotence and active role in history, such as the following:

I swear by the declining day that perdition shall be the lot of man, except for those who have faith and do good works; who exhort each other to justice and to fortitude. [103: The Declining Day]

Within the Meccan period itself the style and content of the *surahs* developed. The earliest use short sentences, particularly powerful imagery and are the most lyrical. The later ones, by contrast, are longer, more direct and sermonizing, and less heated. Stories of the early prophets become more developed. When Muhammad and his followers migrated to Medina, political circumstances were

considerably more favorable, and the *surahs* reflect the confident voice of a lawgiver concerned with social and political issues. These are the longest *surahs* in the Qur'an, and deal with the giving of the law.

Muslims believe that the literary quality of the Qur'an itself validates Muhammad's claims of prophethood. For, although illiterate, he produced a literary work of great merit. Stylistically, most of the Qur'an is written in first, second, and third person, with Allah addressing believers, unbelievers, or Muhammad. The first person is used when God describes his divine attributes, and the second when describing actions in which humans participate. Passages not in the voice of Allah are prefaced by the word "say," indicating that they are to be recited by believers. Most of the Qur'an is written in rhymed prose, as opposed to poetry with meter. The latter approach was typical of poets who were thought to be guided by *jinn*, an association which Muhammad strongly resisted. Phrases are repetitive and well-suited for reciting; indeed, several traditional Qur'anic division schemes break the text into sections for daily reading. The memorization and recitation of Qur'anic verses was an expected form of piety for Muslims during Muhammad's life and Muhammad

himself ritually recited its passages. Special reciters memorized the Qur'an's entirety and recited it daily. At least one function of recitation was to preserve its content, as illustrated in the following Hadith passage: "The Prophet heard a reciter reciting the Qur'an in the mosque at night. The Prophet said, May Allah bestow his mercy on him, as he has reminded me of such-and-such verses of such-and-such Surahs, which I missed!" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6:562). Recitation was also a daily ritual for lay people: "The Prophet said, 'if one recites the last two verses of Surah-al-Baqara at night, it is sufficient for him (for that night)'" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6:560). In Qur'anic recitation, not only were the words memorized, but the tonal song-like vocalizations as well.

The initial compilation of the Qur'an is a remarkable story. After each of Muhammad's revelations, efforts were made to record their content, either through writing or memorization by specially assigned reciters. Although Muhammad may have done some editing of the earlier *surahs* when in Medina, no definitive "book" existed at the time of his death. A year after Muhammad's death, many of the original reciters were killed in battle. Fearing that the Qur'an's contents would be lost through time, the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, ordered the

compilation of the first complete text of the Qur'an. The task was assigned to Zayd ibn Thabit, an aide of Muhammad, who pieced the text together from oral and written sources in Medina. In spite of the existence of Abu Bakr's single written compilation of the Qur'an, the Qur'an was still principally transmitted through memorized accounts and scattered written verses. Variant Qur'an fragments continued to circulate for 24 more years, until the third Caliph, Uthman, ordered the creation of a definitive text. Again Zayd supervised the compilation. He gathered all existing manuscript fragments and met with the original reciters accompanying Muhammad who had the complete contents memorized. When the compilation was complete, all previous written versions were destroyed, assuring that only one version of the Qur'an would remain. Although variant editions appeared later, the definitive text of the Qur'an we have today is the work of Zayd. Diacritical marks were later introduced to fix proper vocalization for recitation.

The content of the Qur'an covers a variety of subjects. Many stories parallel accounts in the Old Testament, and some from the New Testament, especially those of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Jesus. It is unlikely that Muhammad had access to Arabic translations of

Jewish or Christian texts, but instead relied on oral traditions of the local Jewish and Christian populace. Other narratives are of Arabian origin. Large sections of the Qur'an provide legislation for the newly formed Muslim community in Medina.

For Muslims, the Qur'an records more than the words of Muhammad; it is Allah's eternal speech; the Torah and Bible are earlier and incomplete revelations of Allah. Most Muslims believe that the Qur'an is uncreated, existing from eternity, with an original engraved tablet of the Qur'an in heaven. This eternal Qur'an is written in the Arabic language, and so authentic copies of the Qur'an will also only be in Arabic. The first unofficial translation appeared in 1141 in Latin, which was loathed by Muslims for its disparaging renderings. The physical book itself is sacred, and copies of the Qur'an are touched only after ceremonial cleansing of the handler.

HADITH CANONS.

After the Qur'an, the second most authoritative group of texts in Islam are the *Hadith* canons. The term *Hadith* means talk or speech, and it refers to collected narratives reporting actions and sayings of Muhammad recounted by his companions. These monumental collections are the principal basis for interpreting the Qur'an and were used to develop early Islamic legal systems.

While Muhammad was alive, his companions took note of his life events and his sayings. Within the first hundred years after Muhammad's death, individual sayings were transmitted both orally and in written form from teachers of *Hadith* to their students. Within the second hundred years, booklets of *Hadith* appeared on single topics, and later on several topics. The number of *Hadith* grew to about three quarters of a million, most being duplicates with only slight variations as generated by the continually growing number of teachers and students of *Hadith*. Finally, they were systematically compiled in the 9th and 10th centuries into no less than twelve multi-volume collections.

Hadith sayings are in two parts. First is the story itself (*matn*), and second is a list of names

constituting the chain of sources which establish the story's authenticity (*isnad*). The stories themselves are of two types. The first, called sacred *Hadith* (*Hadith qudsi*), contain divine revelations similar to those in the Qur'an. The second, called noble *Hadith* (*Hadith sharif*), relate to Muhammad's personal life and nonprophetic utterances. For *Hadith* compilers, a story's authenticity rested on the integrity of each person mentioned in the chain of sources. A discipline emerged which critically scrutinized the lives of the transmitters. According to the norms of this field of study, even an otherwise authentic statement that bears a faulty chain of transmitters should be regarded as inauthentic. Muslims agree that many of the *Hadith* were invented in the early days of Islam to answer questions of law, support religious factions, or serve political needs in struggles for power. Thousands were rejected early on for this very reason. An early *Hadith* scholar was even executed for confessing he fabricated 4,000 sayings for financial gain. Critical *Hadith* scholarship is still in its infancy, however, and judgment regarding the extent of their authenticity must be postponed.

MUHAMMAD'S TEACHINGS

Muhammad met with resistance concerning the concept of the bodily resurrection of the dead. In the following, from two late Meccan surahs, he makes this doctrine more palpable by offering analogies to bodily resurrection, and also by illustrating Allah's power, which implies Allah's ability to resurrect even dead bodies.

The Qur'an states that every nation has its prophet (surah 13:7). Muhammad mentions about thirty prophets who preceded him, most of which are also mentioned in the Bible. The prophets typically spoke to unreceptive idolatrous people, and Allah subsequently destroyed the idolaters for their continued disbelief. The hillsides are scattered with the ruins of the idolater's cities as monuments to their recalcitrance. As Muhammad's own prophetic message was met with disbelief and hostility, he warned the Meccans of the consequences. During Muhammad's late Meccan period of revelation, detailed accounts of early prophets are prominent. Surah 11, titled Hud, recounts the stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Abraham, Lot, Shu'aib, and Moses. Noah, Abraham, Lot, and Moses are from Jewish tradition. The Qur'an's account of these prophets differs from biblical accounts, explaining in surah 6:91 that the Jews

suppressed much of Moses' revelation and that Muhammad is revealing new information. Unique to Qur'anic tradition, Hud, Salih, and Shu'aib, are prophets sent by Allah to the Arabs.

Surah 17:1 of the Qur'an, written in the middle Meccan period, reads, "Glory be to him who made his servant go by night from the sacred temple [of Mecca] to the farther temple [of Jerusalem] whose surroundings we have blessed, that we might show him some of our signs." Referred to as the Night Journey, Muhammad was carried by Gabriel to the temple of Jerusalem (isra), and brought through the seven heavens to God (mi'raj). Although some Muslims interpret this as a vision, most see it as a literal journey. In commemoration of this event, a Muslim shrine called the Dome of the Rock stands on the place of Muhammad's ascent, the former site of the Jewish temple of Jerusalem. It is Islam's third most holy place, after Mecca and Medina. The story of the Night Journey from the Hadith is recounted here.

As Muhammad's revelations grew to a sizable collection within a few years, the Qur'an itself frequently became a subject of further revelation. A middle Meccan surah recounts, "We have divided the Qur'an into sections so that you may recite it to the people with deliberation. We have imparted it by gradual

revelation" (surah 17:106). Another states, "We have revealed the Qur'an in the Arabic tongue that you may understand its meaning. It is a transcript of the eternal book in our keeping, sublime, and full of wisdom" (surah 43:3-4). In a late Meccan surah, Muhammad's illiteracy is offered as proof that the Qur'an was divinely revealed (surah 29:48). The following from Jonah (surah 10), of the late Meccan period, discusses the fate of those who deny the divine authority of the Qur'an.

When Muhammad became the city administrator in Medina, the focus of his revelations soon shifted from being a lone defender of monotheism to his being a law giver. He present laws concerning drinking, gambling, orphans, divorce, weaning, widows, and dowries. In spite of contemporary criticism of the treatment of women in Muslim societies, Islam introduced women's rights where virtually none existed previously. Before Muhammad, women were essentially property, with no inheritance rights, and often buried alive in infancy. Marriage contracts were loose, and often temporary. Muhammad condemned infanticide and required that daughters be given a share of inheritance. In matters of marriage, adultery was denounced, women were allowed the right of consent for marriage, and divorce became

more difficult. Written about 626, the following selections from Women (surah 4) are laws pertaining to women and include some of these reforms.

According to the Qur'an, certain groups of people had received revealed scriptures prior to Muhammad. These "people of the book" include the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Sabians. The Qur'an acknowledges the legitimacy of these religions, maintaining a place for such believers in the afterlife. However, many people of the book have abandoned their revealed teachings by adopting false gods and denying God's true prophets. The following selection from the Table (surah 5) admonishes the unbelieving people of the book. A case in point is Christianity. According to the Qur'an, Jesus is a highly exalted prophet who was born of a virgin, performed miracles, delivered God's message, and will return at the end of time. However, the Qur'an denies the reality of the crucifixion, implying that it was either an illusion or someone else was substituted. More significantly, it denies the Trinity and the divine nature of Jesus, as seen in the following selection from the Table (surah 5), written about 629.

The primary ritual requirements of Islam are known as the Five Pillars of Islam (arkan ad-din). They are, (1) sincerely uttering the creed,

"there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger" (shahada), (2) praying five times a day facing Mecca (salat), (3) paying an alms tax for the needy (zakat), (4) fasting during the month of Ramadan (sawm), and (5) making a pilgrimage to Mecca once in one's life, if possible (hajj). Each of these has its foundation in the Qur'an. The foundation of all of four pillars is set in Qur'anic teaching, such as the following discussions of prayer, fasting, alms, and pilgrimage:

[Prayer.] Many a time have We seen you turn you face towards heaven. We will make you turn towards a qiblah that will please you. Turn your face towards the Holy Mosque; wherever you be, turn your faces towards it.

[Fasting.] Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you; ... In the month of Ramadan the Koran was revealed, a book of guidance with proofs of guidance distinguishing right from wrong. Therefore whoever of you is present in that month let him fast. But he who is ill or on a journey shall fast a similar number of days later on.

[Alms.] Give generously for the cause of God and do not with your own hands cast

yourselves into destruction. Be charitable; God loves the charitable. ...

[Pilgrimage.] Make the pilgrimage and visit the Sacred House for His sake. If you cannot, send such offerings as you can afford and do not shave your heads until the offerings have reached their destination. But if any of you is ill or suffers from an ailment of the head, he must pay a ransom either by fasting or by almsgiving or by offering a sacrifice.

[surah 2:144-150, 183-187, 195-200]

Often called the sixth pillar of Muslim obligation, Jihad, or holy war, is struggling for Allah's cause. This, too, has its foundation in the Qu'ran. Islam divides the world into two abodes: the abode of submission, encompassing Muslim territories (Dar al-Islam), and the abode of struggle, encompassing non-Islamic territories (Dar al-Harb). The obligation of jihad is to extend the abode of submission through missionary activities or, when necessary, through armed force. Jihad aims at political control over societies, to govern them by the principles of Islam. In theory, forced conversion of individuals is not intended. Originally the responsibility of the Caliphs, Jihad should only

be undertaken when success is likely. Although the explicit obligation of jihad first appears in the Hadith, its foundations are laid in the Qur'an. The following selection from the Women (surah 4), written just after the unsuccessful battle of Uhud, advises Muslims who fight for Allah.

Other revelations of Muhammad during his final years presents his domestic side. At the time he had nine wives, several previously widowed, and additional slave girls. Some revelations surah advise his wives on proper conduct and discuss his relations with them. Recommendations are also made on etiquette when visiting Muhammad.

THE CALIPHATE.

Muhammad founded both a new religion and a new social order. Although he believed that his mission as a religious prophet was complete at the time of his death, plans for a larger Muslim social community (*umma*) were not as yet realized. He had planned to conquer Syria and Iraq, but died too soon. Upon his death, key political decisions were made by Muhammad's early companions (*Sahaba*), many of whom were his first converts. Their first task was to appoint a successor, or Caliph, who would fill Muhammad's political leadership role, but not his prophetic role. From the start, however, there was political dissent. To the consternation of Ali, Muhammad's cousin who expected to step into the leadership role, the early companions selected Abu Bakr as the first Caliph. For the sake of unity, Ali deferred to his rival. Plans were drawn for military expansion, but the aged Caliph died only two years into his rule.

For the next ten years, the newly appointed Caliph Umar expanded Muslim territory far into the Persian and Byzantine empires. Non-Arab converts were denied equal political rights, and it would be almost a hundred years until a unified Muslim political order would emerge. Umar was stabbed to death by a Persian slave,

and Uthman became the third Caliph. According to legend, trouble started for Uthman when he lost Muhammad's seal ring in a well. He prompted further negative reaction by favoring his family clan, the Umayyads, which originally opposed Muhammad in Mecca. A small rebellion erupted in Medina, in which a disaffected faction (which later became the Kharajites) laid siege to his house. Civil war broke later and, twelve years into his rule, Uthman was assassinated by rebel Muslim troops from Egypt. The early companions finally elected Ali as the fourth Caliph, but he was immediately opposed by Syrian governor Mu'awiyah, who sought to avenge the death of Uthman, his cousin. War broke out between Ali and Mu'awiyah and, on the eve of the decisive battle, Ali was killed by a soldier from a rebel group that had split with him as a result of disagreement with his policies. The Caliphate fell to Ali's son, Husan, but he quickly ceded it to Mu'awiyah.

Under the first wave of Muslim expansion by the first four Caliphs, all of Arabia, Persia, and North Africa were conquered. For the next ninety years the Caliphate was held by the secular Umayyad Dynasty (661-750), established by Mu'awiyah. After Mu'awiyah's death, the Caliphate was passed to his unpopular son

Yazid. In 680 an insurrection against Yazid was launched by Ali's son, Husayn. Husayn and his followers were massacred in what is now the Iraqi city of Kerbala (a tragedy which became the rallying cry of the Shi'i Muslims). Centered in Damascus, the Umayyads continued to push Muslim boundaries. Moving across north Africa and into Spain, expansion into Europe halted at the French borders in the Battle of Tours in 732. The Caliphate was next held by the Abbasid Dynasty (750-1285), centered in Baghdad, and then by the Ottoman Empire (1300-1922), centered in Istanbul. In 1924 the Caliphate was abolished by the Turkish National Assembly, inheritors of the Ottoman Empire. To justify this controversial decision the Assembly maintained that "The idea of a single caliph, exercising supreme religious authority over all the peoples of Islam, is an idea taken from fiction, not from reality."

SUNNI AND SHI'A.

Just as political factions divided early Islam, so did theological differences, the key issue being whether Ali and his successors had a special spiritual status. Islam today is divided into two main groups over this issue. The Sunni, or Sunnite, attribute no special function to Ali, whereas the Shi'a, or Shi'ite, do. Sunnis make up approximately 90% of Muslims worldwide. Their full name is *Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Hadith*, that is, followers of the path laid out by the prophet in his sayings. In addition to rejecting the special spiritual status of Ali, Sunnis recognize the first four Caliphs as political successors to Muhammad and acknowledge the political authority of the Caliphate in general. Sunnis must also follow one of the four schools of Islamic law (*madhahib*), developed in the 8th and 9th centuries.

Prior to the emergence of the four Sunni schools of law, Muslims used several guides to determine proper conduct. After the Qur'an was consulted for guidance, appeals were made to practices of about Muhammad (*sunna*) as compiled by scholars into texts called *Hadith*. When these avenues failed, decisions were made in one of three ways: analogical deductions from existing laws (*qiyas*), consensus of the Muslim

community or its leading scholars (*ijma*), and independent decisions of a single jurist (*ijtihad*).

The four schools of Islamic law not only systematized the above appeal routes, but developed their own codes of behavior from these. The methodological differences between the four schools are subtle, although their geographical domains are more distinct. The *Hanafite* school, which provides the greatest scope of reasoning, predominates in former Turkish empire areas (Turkey, Palestine, Egypt), and India. The *Malikite* school, which focuses more on the traditions of Muhammad's companions rather than Muhammad, is dominant in west Africa. The *Hanbalite* school, the most literalist in adhering to the letter of the Qur'an, is found in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Finally, the *Shafi'ite* school, which developed the standard hierarchy of appeals, is most prominent in Indonesia. It's founder, Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (767-820) was the foremost scholar of early Islamic law. He is most well known for his analysis of the "four roots of jurisprudence". That is, legal questions are resolved by appealing firstly to the Qur'an, secondly to the Sunna, thirdly to consensus, and lastly to analogical reasoning. After his death Shafi'i's disciples founded the Shafi'ite school; his

penetrating analysis of the four roots was also adopted by the other schools of Islamic Law.

Shi'a Muslims, consisting of 10% of the Muslim population, are located primarily in Iran. Shi'a origins are difficult to trace because of negative Sunni chronologies and biased reports by later Shi'as. However, with the assassination of Ali and the creation of the Umayyad Caliphate in 661, a faction loyal to the memory of Ali emerged. Devotion to Ali and his selected descendants became the test for true faith. Early Shi'as were in continual opposition to the ruling Caliph, some groups advocating armed resistance.

About forty factions of Shi'as have emerged over the years. The most numerous are the Twelvers (*Ithna 'Asha-Riyyah*), who comprise about 80% of their number. The central Twelver doctrine is that of the Imam, or leader. Twelvers believe that Muhammad's spiritual abilities (*wilaya*) were passed on to a series of Imams, beginning with Ali. Twelver theology holds that human beings require inspired leadership in order to adhere faithfully to the dictates of Islam and that successive Imams are clearly designated by predecessors (*nass*). Imams are also thought to be guided by Allah and to be infallible (*isma*). Eleven Imams have appeared so far, and they await the appearance

of the twelfth and final, named Mahdi, who is alive but hidden from view. More precisely, the Mahdi is in a state called *occultation*, in which he can see others, but others cannot see him; at age four, Allah placed him in that state for protection after the death of his father, the 11th Imam, 873 CE. It is believed that the Mahdi made four representations (*wakils*) between 873-940, a period called the *lesser occultation*. He will return at the end of time, take vengeance on unbelievers, and initiate an era of peace. Until then, leaders called the *Mujtahid* make decisions of canon law on behalf of the hidden Imam. In this century, the Ayatollahs have this function.

Two other Shi'a factions deserve mentioning. The Fivers (*Zaydis*) split from twelver tradition by recognizing Zaydis as the fifth Imam (as opposed to Muhammad al-Baqir). Concentrated in Yemen, they do not assert the necessity of Imams and accept some of the early Caliphs. The Seveners (*Isma'ili*) split from twelver tradition by recognizing Isma'il as the seventh Imam (rather than Musa-l-Kazim). They see Isma'il as the final Imam, Mahdi, who will return for the day of judgment.

The Sunnis and Shi'as also part company on the Hadith collections which they acknowledge. The Sunnis have nine collections, six of which are particularly revered. The most widely accepted

of these are referred to as the *Two Sahih* (authentic): *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. The first of these, compiled by al-Bukhari (d. 875), is the most important. A prominent teacher of *Hadith*, al-Bukhari examined 600,000 sayings, the majority being duplicate versions, and sifted them down to 7,275 authentic ones. Of these, about 2,700 are nonrepetitious. Limited by space constraints, he remarks that he left out other sayings which he believed were authentic. The sayings are topically categorized in 97 books, with some longer sayings split and categorized into two distinct topical divisions. The second most revered collection is that by Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 875), who examined 300,000 traditions and reduced them to 4,000. A student of al-Bukhari, al-Hajjaj is thought to have been more critical in deeming a saying "authentic" and, unlike his teacher, presents the longer sayings in their integrated form. The remaining four collections (or *Sunan*) were compiled by Abu Dawud (d. 886), at-Tirmidhi (d. 892), an-Nasa'i (d. 915), and Ibn Majah (d. 886). Of the six *Hadith* collections, those by al-Bukhari, Muslim al-Hajjaj and Dawud have been made available in English translation. Three Shi'a collections, called *akhbar* (as opposed to *Hadith*) are traditionally thought to originate with Ali and the Imams (Ja'far al-Sadiq in particular).

Larger than the Sunni collections, they were compiled by al-Kafi of al-Kulini (d. 939) (whose collection is the most widely respected), al-Qummi (d. 991), and al-Tusi (d. 1067).

SUFISM.

Almost as old as Islam itself, Sufism is the mystical tradition of Islam which emphasizes mystical union with God. Rabi'a al-'Adawiya (717-801) was one of the earliest and most admired sufis and is sometimes referred to as the Muslim St. Teresa. She was kidnapped as a girl, sold into slavery, and was later freed because of her piety. Thereafter she lived as an ascetic with a small group of followers. Although she did not write systematic treatises on sufism, her sayings were passed down to later generations of sufis who recorded them and used them as sounding boards for their own mystical ideas. Her key theological contribution is the notion of unconditional love of God (mahabbah), which parallels the Hindu notion of *bhakti* or Christian notion of *agape*. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111) was a scholar of Islamic law and philosopher who ultimately rejected academic approaches to truth in favor of immediate mystical experience. His autobiography *Deliverer from Error* describes his initial acquaintance with Sufism:

I thus comprehended their fundamental teachings on the intellectual side, and progressed, as far as is possible by study and oral instruction, in the knowledge of mysticism. It became clear to me, however,

that what is most distinctive of mysticism is something which cannot be apprehended by study, but only by immediate experience (*dhawq* -- literally "tasting"), by ecstasy and by a moral change. What a difference there is between *knowing* the definition of health and satiety, together with their causes and presuppositions, and *being* healthy and satisfied!...

The most widely acclaimed Sufi writer is Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi (1207-1273) whose six book poetic work entitled *The Masnawi* is often referred to as the Qur'an in Persian. Central to Rumi's writings are the paired notions of union and separation. That is, moments of the mystic's life consist of blissful union with God, whereas, of necessity, other moments involve separation. Separation frequently manifests itself in human pain and suffering. Rumi argues that such suffering must be understood in a larger context: the spiritual happiness we achieve in the state of union is accentuated by the suffering we experience while in separation.

* * * *

BAHA'I FAITH

The Baha'i Faith began in middle 19th century Persia, a Shi'ite Islamic society. Founded by Baha'u'llah and his forerunner the Bab, developed and guided by his son, Abdu'l-Baha, and great-grandson, Shoghi Effendi, it is now widely recognized as an independent world religion. The Baha'i Faith emphasizes the unity of all religions and world peace. "To be a Baha'i," according to Abdu'l-Baha, "simply means to love all the world; to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood." Baha'i doctrine is sometimes expressed in the "three onenesses."

(1) The oneness of God: there is a single and ultimately unknowable God who is given different names. The knowledge we do have of God derives from his various prophets who instruct us. (2) The oneness of humankind: there a single human race, and we are all members of it. (3) The oneness of religion: all religions are unified insofar as they are each stages in God's revelatory plan.

THE BAB.

The Baha'i faith is historically founded on the Babi religion, which in turn rests on the Shi'ite Muslim doctrine of the Hidden Imam. According to this doctrine, the Mahdi, the final Imam—or spiritual successor to Ali—is alive, but was placed by God in a condition of occultation in which he can see others, but others cannot see him (or at least they cannot recognize him). He will return at the end of time, take vengeance on the wicked, and initiate an era of peace. Shi'ite Islam has numerous denominations and sects which have differing views of the status of the Imams in general and of the Mahdi. The 19th century Shaykhi sect, founded by Shaykh (Sheik) Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (1753-1826), maintained that Imams have an almost divine status and that each generation needs a gate (Bab) as an intermediary between the Hidden Imam and believers. Although one of the Shaykhi leaders claimed to be guided by the Mahdi in his dreams, no one initially claimed to be the Bab himself.

The forerunner to the Baha'i faith was affiliated with the Shaykhi sect -- either formally or as a sympathizer. Sayyid Ali-Muhammad Shiraz (1819-1850) was born into a merchant family in south Persia; his father died soon after his birth, and he was raised by his uncle. He married at 22

and subsequently joined the Shaykhi. In 1844, while on a pilgrimage to Mecca, he claimed to be the Bab, which was a more extreme claim than his Shaykhi predecessors made. It is this event which Baha'is designate as the beginning of their religion. Scholars believe that the Bab privately announced to his followers that he was the Mahdi himself; the public declaration of Babhood, though, was politically more safe to make. Even so, his declaration quickly attracted followers, but it also raised political concerns, and for the next 6 years -- the remainder of his life -- he was exiled or imprisoned. After his announcement, the Bab formed a religious group called the Babis. The first 18 of his followers were sent out as proselytizers. The *Qayyumu'l-Asma'*, a commentary on the Surah of Joseph in the Qur'an, was composed in 1844 and is the first book the Bab wrote after his Declaration. The first chapter was written in the presence of the his first believer, Mulla Husayn, and, according to the Bab, the whole book was written in 40 days. Baha'is consider it his first revealed text and his most important work. He declares a new day, comparing the book itself to the Qur'an, and thereby announcing a new revelation from God. The *Qayyumu'l-Asma'* continually draws on passages and themes from the Qur'an, replicating many of its laws. It is also in the

literary style of the Qur'an -- even to the point that the Bab intended it to be recited like the Qur'an. The work establishes a fundamental theme in Baha'i faith: The Bab is a continuation in the line of the prophets acknowledged by Islam, most notably Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Later the Bab publicly claimed to be the Imam Mahdi himself, and in 1848, in an important work called the *Bayan*, he declared that he was a manifestation of God, superseding Muhammad. The Bab believed that the resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell were to be understood metaphorically. In the *Bayan* he explains that the "day of resurrection" refers to the advent of a new dispensation which "resurrects" the previous one. For example, the Qur'an is resurrected in the *Bayan*, and the *Bayan* ultimately will be resurrected in the advent of "He whom God will make manifest." The *Bayan* also presents a constitution for the coming Babi state and a series of laws. In perhaps the most controversial section, it maintains that believers can take all possessions of nonbelievers. The severity of some of the Bab's laws dramatized his messianic role and rhetorically underscored his legislative authority. However, these laws were counter-balanced by others which prohibit harming or offending others, especially non-believers. In

any event, only a few of the Bab's laws were ever implemented.

Acceptance of the Bab's message was not as widespread as he had hoped. The Bab compared his situation to the initial disbelief Muhammad's contemporaries had demonstrated towards Muhammad -- just as Muhammad compared his situation to the rejected prophets from the past. And, again, like Muhammad, the Bab warned of divine punishment for disbelievers. He summoned the Shah of Persia to acknowledge his authority, and in 1848 the Babis distanced themselves from Islam. The same year about 300 Babis set off on a march which prompted armed confrontation. They defended themselves, but were quickly crushed by the Persian government. Massive persecution of Babis followed, and the Bab was executed by a firing squad in 1850. Witnesses reported that he and a follower were suspended by rope. The first volley only severed their ropes and they dropped to the ground. Seeing this as a divine sign, the commander of the regiment withdrew the troops, but a new group of soldiers was brought in, and they finished the task. The Bab's body was secretly retrieved by his followers and, after a number of years, transported to its final resting place at the Mausoleum of the Bab in Haifa, Israel. His immediate successor as Babi leader

was Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal), who resided in Baghdad. Before the Bab died, he foretold of a leader, greater than himself, who would finish his work.

In the *Bayan*, the Bab announced the coming of a future prophet -- the Sun of Truth -- or, more generally described as "He Whom God Shall Manifest." The Bab depicts him in eschatological terms and notes that his nature is reflected in the *Bayan*. Baha'is believe that the Bab is foretelling the coming of Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), the Baha'i faith's second founder. The name "Baha'u'llah" is an honorific title which means "Glory of God". Baha'u'llah, originally named Mirza Husayn-Ali Nur, was born in Tehran, the capital of Persia. He had no formal education and was eldest son of a distinguished minister of state. When 22, his father died and he was left to manage the estate and care for his family. At age 26 (1844) he espoused Babism and became one of the Bab's earliest followers, although, as some Baha'i historians maintain, he never personally met the Bab. In 1852 a Babi named Sadiq attempted to assassinate the Iranian Shah in retaliation for the execution of the Bab. Sadiq and 80 others were killed, and many more were imprisoned or exiled. Baha'u'llah's property was confiscated and he was imprisoned for four months, after

which he was exiled to Baghdad. Mirza Yahya (the Bab's provisional successor) went into hiding and made his way to Baghdad when he heard that Baha'u'llah was there. This initial period of exile lasted until 1853 and was relatively peaceful. Baha'u'llah retreated to the desert for two years (1854-1856), and when he returned he ably met challenges by the Muslim Mullahs in defense of Babism. He wrote several books while in Baghdad, the most important of these being *The Book of Certitude (Kitab-i-Iqan)*. The work explains how different periods of time had their own prophets who subtly anticipated future prophets in future dispensations. Followers of these prophets invariably misinterpreted their messages. Baha'u'llah believes that special attention to key passages in their writings and symbolic terms will show that each prophet indeed announced the coming of the next. At this stage in his writings, he does not include himself in the chain of prophets.

BAHA'U'LLAH AND ABDU'L-BAHA

In 1863 Baha'u'llah was summoned to Constantinople (Istanbul). While preparing for the journey his house overflowed with well-wishers, and for 12 days he, and later his family, were compelled to camp in a garden, later named Ridvan (paradise). At this time he privately announced that he was the leader foretold by the Bab. As such, he declared himself to be the manifestation or appearance of God. This announcement is known to Baha'is as the Declaration at Ridvan, and is the basis of their most important festival celebrated each year from April 21-May 2. Baha'u'llah, his family, and 26 followers went to Constantinople, where they were confined to squalid conditions for four months, and then they moved to Adrianople (Edirne), Turkey, where they remained until 1868. There he attracted more followers and openly announced his mission. He wrote letters to the Shah and other world leaders, including Napoleon III, Pope Pius IX, Czar Nicholas II, and Queen Victoria. In 1868, a long-standing tension between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya culminated in division, principally owing to Baha'u'llah's claim of a new dispensation and universal religion. Contrary to Baha'u'llah's wishes, their quarreling led to violence among the two factions; Mirza Yahya

was deported to Cyprus, where ultimately his followers abandoned him. Baha'u'llah was deported to Acre, Palestine (then part of Syria), which was a prison city for criminals of the Turkish Empire.

For two years he and 80 followers were confined to army barracks; the conditions were so harsh that several of the followers died. When the barracks were needed to house troops, Baha'u'llah was moved to a small house in the city in which he stayed for six years. During these years his followers grew substantially in number. At this time he wrote *The Most Holy Book (Kitab-i-Aqdas)*, his most important work, which lays out the basic laws and principles for his followers and establishes the basis of Baha'i administration. Although the Bayan also contains laws, Baha'is believe that the Bayan has been superseded by the Aqdas. Accordingly, the Aqdas follows some of the Bayan's laws and ignores others. In 1877 he was released from the prison city although the prison sentence was never removed. After a two year stay in a house north of Acre, Baha'u'llah moved to a more regal estate, known as Bahji, secured through donations from his followers. He spent the remaining years of his life writing and teaching while administrative functions were taken over by his eldest son, Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921).

Many of Baha'u'llah's writings focus on the place of the Baha'i faith in God's scheme of revelation, and also on laws which govern the Baha'i community. Some writings, though, focus on the larger issue of world peace -- a distinguishing feature of the Baha'i faith. Just as the Bab reinterpreted the traditional notion of the "Day of Judgment," so too does Baha'u'llah give a broader interpretation to the notion of "paradise" and "hell." They are partly experienced here on earth, although they are more vast in the afterlife. Upon Baha'u'llah's death in 1892 Abdu'l-Baha was appointed successor, as designated in Baha'u'llah's will. Baha'u'llah's burial site -- a garden building near the main mansion at Bahji -- is the most holy site for the Baha'i faith.

Abdu'l-Baha ("servant of Baha") was born in Tehran, and was only nine when his father was first imprisoned (1852). He was a dutiful companion to his father, attending him throughout his years of exile and closely guarding him. After Baha'u'llah's death, the transition of leadership was not smooth, particularly as Abdu'l-Baha was opposed by several family members. After Baha'u'llah's death, Abdu'l-Baha built the shrine on Mount Carmel as a burial site for the Bab. Abdu'l-Baha's dissenting relatives reported to the

Turkish government that he was constructing a fortress, and in 1901 he was confined to Acre for seven years. There he lived an austere life, teaching and visiting the sick. One of his most popular works, *Some Answered Questions* was written at this time. One of the issues he considers is that of pantheism -- the theological position that God is identical to the universe as a whole. He distinguishes between two types of pantheism: that of the Sufis and that of the prophets. The pantheism of the Sufis maintains that individual beings (people, animals) are sub-components of God's essence. This he rejects, since it implies that God becomes a lower form of existence. The pantheism of the prophets sees the world as an emanation of God, distinct from, yet illuminated by God's being. This maintains the immanence of God's attributes, while still conserving God's transcendence. Baha'u'llah endorses this view true Pantheism.

In 1907 a tribunal met to determine his fate. Coincidentally, a revolution broke out in the Ottoman Empire, and the tribunal members were called to Istanbul. The new leaders of the Empire (the Young Turks) released all political and religious prisoners in the empire. Thus, after a total of 40 years of imprisonment in Palestine, Abdu'l-Baha too was released (1908). In 1911-1913 he traveled to Great Britain,

France, Germany, Hungary, the United States, Canada, and Egypt, where he met with religious and political leaders, scientists, and philosophers. He spoke at universities, charitable organizations, and institutions of various religions. Accordingly, Abdu'l-Baha is responsible for spreading the Baha'i faith beyond the middle east and into the western world. He continued adapting the Baha'i faith to modern social ideas. In his role as a spiritual leader, he maintained exclusive authority in interpreting scripture, as appointed to him by Baha'u'llah, although he did not consider his own writings to be equally authoritative. During the years of World War I, Abdu'l-Baha and the Baha'is in Palestine were under war-time restrictions and had only limited contact with outside pilgrims. Their efforts focused on securing food supplies for the Baha'is and the surrounding poor. After the war, Palestine was occupied by the British and Abdu'l-Baha was officially honored with Knighthood. He died in 1921, stating in his will that leadership should passed to his 24 year old grandson, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), whom he appointed "Guardian of the Cause."

SHOGHI EFFENDI AND THE HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

Studying abroad at the time, Shoghi Effendi was surprised at the news of his position. The writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah reflect the fact that their initial audience was Muslim. The unity of religions, races, and God are indeed pervasive themes of their writings; however, these themes are often presented in contexts which defend the Bab's and Baha'u'llah's roles as legitimate prophets in the line of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. In Shoghi Effendi's writings, the Muslim context is less important and the themes of unity are brought to the fore on their own merits. During his tenure as leader, he established the administrative structure of the Baha'i faith and became responsible for the subsequent formalized organization of Baha'is around the world. As a visionary, many of his writings and talks map out achievement goals and multi-year plans to accomplish these. One of these involved plans to spread the Baha'i faith worldwide, including North America. His definitive English translations and clarifications of Baha'u'llah's writings helped secure the Baha'i faith in non-Islamic Western countries.

Perhaps most importantly, he arranged for the long-awaited election of members to the Universal House of Justice (Bayt al-Adl al-Azam)

which would succeed him after his death by overseeing the Baha'i community and elucidating doctrine. The plan for this task was Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament which, in turn, draws from the Aqdas. The first election of the members of the Universal House of Justice took place in 1963, six years after his death. Members reside in Haifa, Israel, meet almost daily, and are re-elected every five years. Today, the Baha'i faith has over 5 million followers in more than 230 countries worldwide, and is one of the world's fastest growing religions. It remains the largest religious minority in Iran, the cradle of the Baha'i faith, with more than a quarter million believers. However, since the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979, more than 200 Baha'is have been executed, and thousands more persecuted.

BAHA'I TEACHING.

The Baha'i faith now reflects little of its original Imami theology, although Shi'ite elements are more present in Iranian Baha'i traditions. Because of Baha'u'llah's appearance, the function of the Bab is no longer considered primary. A central tenet of Baha'i teaching holds that God's nature is unknowable. Everything around us, though, exhibits different attributes of the divine as each is created by God and endowed with different sets of attributes. Most generally, God is a single infinite power, which implies the nonexistence of evil: evil is only the absence of good, just as darkness is the absence of light. Neither darkness nor evil have a reality, but are only names we give to the absence of the reality in question. The most striking aspect of Baha'i theology is its notion of the unity of religions. Revelation is thought to be progressive, and prophets deliver messages appropriate to their own times. All true prophets from the various religions should be acknowledged as genuine—including Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus, Muhammad, Krishna, and Buddha. The prophets are *manifestations* of God and have special insight into the spiritual realm. Baha'i revelation is seen as the fulfillment of all previous revelations.

In its eschatological teachings, the Baha'i faith holds that there is life after death through the continuation of a disembodied soul. However, heaven, hell, and final judgment are symbolic. Baha'u'llah is the messianic figure spoken of by previous prophets, and the "final judgment" is the appearance of each new manifestation/prophet of God. Institutionally, the Baha'i faith has no official priests, no monastic component, and all Baha'is are expected to participate in teaching. Local spiritual assemblies assist with life cycle rites, such as weddings and funerals, plan community events, counsel members, and coordinate Baha'i education programs. Nine Baha'is are elected annually by secret ballot (April 21) to help supervise the local assemblies. National spiritual assemblies oversee the local spiritual assemblies, and the Universal House of Justice oversees these. Baha'is follow a 19 month calendar, each month having 19 days with four intercalary days between the last two months. One month is designated for fasting.

In their social and moral beliefs, Baha'is teach racial and gender equality, monogamy, abstinence from alcohol and narcotics, and the voluntary sharing of property. Strong emphasis is placed on world peace and the unity of all humankind, as indicated in the statement by

Baha'u'llah that "You are all fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, the flowers of one garden." The Baha'i founders and the Universal House of Justice variously advocated a universal language, a universal league of nations, and an international court of arbitration. Although Baha'is believe in the doctrine of a just war, military aggression is rejected.

BAHA'I SCRIPTURES.

The most sacred group of Baha'i texts are the writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, which are considered to be revelations. Second to those are the writings of Abdu'l-Baha which, while not revealed, are considered to be inspired. The writings of Shoghi Effendi are not on a par with either of these groups, but are still considered authoritative. The letters of the Universal House of Justice are also authoritative, but are not scriptural either. The complete corpus of Baha'i scriptures is perhaps two hundred volumes, although some items are still in manuscript form. The Bab, Baha'u'llah, and Abdu'l-Baha were imprisoned and exiled for much of their lives, and, since they were prohibited from public speaking under these conditions, they devoted their time to writing.

The Bab composed about 50 volumes of writings. His most important work is the *Qayyum al-Asma'* (1844), a commentary on the Surah of Joseph in the *Qur'an*, which Baha'is consider to be the Bab's first revealed work. The foremost doctrinal works of the Bab are the Persian and Arabic *Bayan* ("exposition"). Although they share the same title, they are two independent works with some overlapping themes. The Persian *Bayan* (1848) is larger, although intentionally left incomplete, and is his principal

doctrinal work. The Arabic *Bayan* (1850) was composed during the last few months of the Bab's life.

Baha'u'llah penned over one hundred volumes of writings, including letters to world leaders, prayers, and laws. Many of these are published as compilations. His most important writings are *The Book of Certitude (Kitab-i-Iqan)*, *Most Holy Book (Kitab-i-Aqdas)*, *The Hidden Words*, *The Seven Valleys*, *Tablet of the Holy Mariner*, and *Tablet of Glad-Tidings*. Abdu'l-Baha's writings include *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, *A Traveler's Narrative*, *Memorials of the Faithful*, and *Secret of Divine Civilization*. Important talks were also published, including *Promulgation of Universal Peace* and *Some Answered Questions*. Abdu'l-Baha composed about 50 volumes of text, some of which are in the form of letters to Baha'is as well as to those outside the faith. Shoghi Effendi composed about 35 volumes of text. His key works are *The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah*, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, *The Promised Day is Come*, and *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*. His book *God Passes By* is his interpretation of Baha'i history. His writings also include letters and translations of the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and Abdu'l-Baha. *The Baha'i World*, an ongoing series of volumes founded by Shoghi

Effendi (19 most recently), is a compilation of official Baha'i writings since 1925. It includes religious calendars, festival descriptions, poetry, music, administrative information, articles on theological topics, maps, bibliographies, transliterations, and definitions.